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Sixtieth session

19th plenary meeting

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Official Records

President: Mr. Eliasson (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 3.08 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (continued)

General debate

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Sato Kilman, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Mr. Kilman (Vanuatu): I bring warm greetings from the people of the Republic of Vanuatu.

At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I assure you of my Government's support for the work of the United Nations under your stewardship. I take this opportunity also to acknowledge, with deep admiration, the sterling dedication of your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, who meticulously steered the work of the fifty-ninth session to its conclusion. I would like also to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his active role and for his resilience in continuing the work of United Nations reform.

We come to the Assembly annually to reaffirm our faith and confidence in the purposes and principles of the Charter. This year is especially important, since leaders are meeting five years after the Millennium Summit to take stock of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Although the outcome document has been adopted, we are extremely disappointed with the

omission of numerous paragraphs. The farcical ending of the negotiations resulted in a dilution of the quality of the final document. The United Nations must, in future, avoid becoming a rubber stamp for the powerful.

The world is at a crossroads. Our meeting is taking place at a critical juncture. Civil and political strife, wars, poverty, diseases, famine, drought, natural disasters, terrorism, minority oppression and environmental degradation are affecting the lives of millions of people. The sacrilege of such human suffering is unbelievable and painful to bear.

The United Nations must be able to do more and must respond more promptly to such situations. It must do so by improving its preventive-capacity mechanisms so as to minimize the devastating impact on peoples' livelihood and to ease their suffering.

We must ask, therefore, whether we are really doing enough for our peoples. Is this all about impressive speeches, rhetoric and pretentious, grandiose plans that detract from the real issues that need addressing? My Government is disillusioned by the lack of genuine goodwill and support that is being offered to the United Nations.

I would like to reiterate my Government's message to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

"The Achilles heel of the current structure is the imbalance of power in the United Nations system. It has become so chronic that it has weakened

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the multilateral focus, cohesiveness and internationalism of the United Nations." (A/59/PV.14, p. 25)

The principles of democratization and good governance, so actively advocated and championed by some Members, must be reflected in the reorganization and decision-making process of the United Nations system.

If we are to get back on track, the United Nations must be rejuvenated. It must be reinvigorated so that it can reassume its legitimate and central responsibility in addressing the causes of conflict, maintaining peace and security and promoting the development agenda. But if it is to do that, the Organization's decision-making and other processes must be transparent and truly democratized. Some of us preach strongly on democracy the world over, yet are unable to practice and enforce those values when it really matters. We are now on the threshold of a new beginning, so let us not allow this new opportunity to pass.

At the summit, I said that tolerance and respect must form the nucleus for any reform of the United Nations. Only by enforcing those values will we come to realize the true meaning of justice, equality and human rights. The diversity of the developing world presents huge challenges for us all. However, the strong nations must be able to muster the political will to effect changes. The big players need to transform their philosophy and their mindset, because they have been hindrances to the creation of an equitable system of good governance within multilateral organizations such as the United Nations.

The United Nations remains indispensable for future peace and prosperity. Globalization has brought nations together; we are interlinked and interdependent, and that requires global cooperation and governance from all responsible Members of the Organization. Understandably, there are vested interests held by the powerful. That requires genuine cooperation and goodwill, and those interests and the role of the United Nations must converge in order to ensure compatibility with the international legal framework.

My Government fully supports efforts to reform the United Nations system so as to ensure a stronger and more effective Organization. In this context, my delegation shares the views of other delegations on the need to revise the membership of the Security Council

so as to ensure fair representation of Member States without affecting the authority of the Council. A more representative Council will bring openness and transparency, create confidence and improve understanding and cooperation. The restructuring of the Security Council membership is long overdue. Diversity is essential in that respect.

I agree that terrorism is one of three main scourges confronting humankind today — the others being poverty and disease. My Government condemns those deliberate callous and inhuman acts that have taken the lives of innocent people. There is no just act of terrorism. We agree that we must work collectively in eliminating that deadly menace from the face of the Earth. But the fight against terrorism must be balanced and targeted so as to ensure that resources are equitably channelled into meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

The global economic situation today discriminates against many of the developing economies. Unfair trading practices and the imposition of intrusive policies on national economies affect our economies by opening them up to unfavourable conditions that only favour the stronger nations. Such negative actions marginalize nations and peoples. Marginalization then breeds and incites resentment, fuelling the hatred that eventually creates fertile grounds for extremism to grow and flourish.

We have agreed on the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, which will also enable more work to be done to combat the spread of terrorism, in particular by identifying areas where international support and understanding are required. Although we are injecting many resources into curing the problem, we are not really preventing it from emerging. The world needs a spirit of pacifism if real peace is to prevail. In order to achieve that, the United Nations needs moral leadership — leadership that focuses on security and dignity for the human person.

The post-Monterrey Conference era poses extreme challenges for the economic survival and socio-economic stability of many of the small island developing nations like Vanuatu. We urge our development partners to honour their commitments to reach the 0.7 per cent target for official development assistance (ODA). In this context we welcome the commitments from the United States of America through the Millennium Challenge Account. We also

welcome commitments by Qatar, the European Union and the People's Republic of China. Furthermore, we look forward to the coming to fruition of initiatives by France and other countries.

The pivotal role of trade as the engine for economic growth cannot be overemphasized, but, as many of my colleagues from the small island States and the least developed countries have stated, market access and special preferential treatment must be provided.

Furthermore, many of us are restricted by inflexible and immoral conditions that inhibit new financing and development initiatives. We continue to call for trade and investment and labour export to help our economies to grow.

My Government's national development priorities focus on building the productive sector. The Government's prioritized action agenda highlights the policy areas that we believe to be essential in meeting our development objectives. It is the catalyst for Vanuatu's medium- to long-term strategic planning, which emphasizes the need to empower our rural population through infrastructure- and capacity-building initiatives. The development policy framework is consistent with achieving the MDG targets, and the development strategy is being refined to give equal consideration to our other international commitments and the Pacific Plan. We appeal to our development partners to assist us in the effective implementation of our strategy.

Mr. Martirosyan (Armenia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

A fundamental lesson to be drawn from Vanuatu's reforms is that they have been forced from outside, without being adapted to our national circumstances. From Vanuatu's perspective, externally driven reforms must be buttressed by an equal partnership that respects local traditions and cultures and the rights of all citizens, without disturbing the essential uniting mechanisms of society that have successfully held us together. Vanuatu embraces democracy and the concepts of good governance and transparency, but those far-reaching principles must be tailored to traditional systems without affecting their relevance and significance.

With regard to the environment, we urge our development partners to actively support the effective

implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. The challenges confronting island States are ominous, and I repeat the call that more recognition should be given to accommodate our natural characteristics and vulnerabilities. We also urge States that have not yet done so to act responsibly by ratifying the Kyoto Protocol as soon as possible.

On the question of the shipment of radioactive materials and hazardous waste, improvements in safeguards and assurances should not have to await a calamity. Preventive measures must be the course of action to take. The risks posed by the forces of nature, coupled with increased terrorist activities, are too grave for enhanced safeguards to deal with. The world would be better off banning such shipments rather than endlessly trying to perfect safeguards approaches that, at best, only limit such serious risks. Complacency would be our greatest mistake.

The Charter of the United Nations espouses the principles that continue to guide the Organization's efforts in the process of self-determination. That right must be progressively advanced. The United Nations must be consistent and not lose sight of the fundamental right of self-determination for those who are working their way out of the shackles of colonial rule. Ruling and sovereign authorities must ensure that the process remains on track.

Where the United Nations has failed to fully comply with the appropriate legal procedures, it is only proper that such instances be adequately addressed to allow justice to prevail for the victims. Circumventing the issue only exposes the dark history and raises serious questions about the credibility, relevance and integrity of the United Nations. Only in an open and consistent manner can we redress past failures and provide a stronger basis for the advancement of United Nations ideals.

Such contradictions simply make a mockery of the fundamental principles of human rights and self-determination clearly enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. How can we call for respect for human rights, yet blatantly ignore the pleas of the millions calling out for justice? The United Nations cannot, and must not, continue to turn a blind eye to its own past failures. It is morally, politically and legally wrong to do so.

The continuing disputes raised over the implementation of United Nations resolutions are clear

examples challenging the integrity and validity of the United Nations. We cannot ignore the calls of the West Papuans in their quest for justice. We urge the United Nations to act responsibly in revisiting the case of West Papua. However, we are encouraged by the Indonesian Government's efforts to address alleged human rights abuses. We also welcome decisions empowering West Papuans to manage their own affairs in collaboration with the central Government.

The United Nations must also explore various avenues to end the economic embargo imposed on Cuba. Countless resolutions have been adopted to no effect, and the Cuban people continue to be marginalized in the multilateral trading system. This is a critically challenging responsibility. Some may see it as an improbable task, but it must be addressed with genuine support and goodwill on the part of the relevant authorities and sovereign States.

In conclusion, I hope that the Creator's wisdom will prevail as we continue our journey. Despite all our differences and diversities, human security for all is our main goal and should remain the focus of the United Nations agenda. The cardinal question is, will Members allow the United Nations to undertake serious reforms in meeting the challenges ahead? And will the Organization be capable of guaranteeing a future of peace and prosperity that is not reserved only for the big players but will be enjoyed by all? Will the United Nations become a juggernaut for the stronger nations? A famous biblical verse reminds us about the fundamental wisdom of building on rock instead of sand. The future remains in our hands, and the Republic of Vanuatu will play its part.

May our beloved almighty Creator bless us all.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Carlos Morales Troncoso, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Morales Troncoso (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): Permit me to join others in expressing, on behalf of our President, Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, our heartfelt congratulations to Ambassador Jan Eliasson of Sweden on his election as President of the General Assembly at this historic sixtieth session. The Dominican Republic is confident that he will lead it in an effective and fruitful manner. I also express my gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his most valuable contributions to the strengthening of the United Nations as an

institution. In addition, I wish to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping of Gabon and to acknowledge his notable work in leading the most recent session.

This sixtieth session of the General Assembly should go down in history as one of the most momentous United Nations sessions. Proof of that lies in two areas of major significance on its agenda: first, accountability with regard to the degree of achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and renewal of the commitments made to achieve them; and secondly, setting out the course for reform of the Organization to adapt it so that it can address current challenging problems and guarantee the effectiveness of its actions in order to ensure the development, freedom and peace of all the world's peoples.

For nations such as the one I represent, the ambitious agenda aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 has become the key governmental programme.

What could be more important to small underdeveloped nations with scarce natural resources than leading their people out of the socio-economic abyss caused by poverty, poor health and the lack of education and productive employment? No political action is more urgent — at least not in the Dominican Republic. Eliminating poverty in the world is a monumental task requiring unstinting political commitment and the collective participation of all societies, as well as unlimited economic support from the developed nations.

The heartbreaking realities of the present are morally unacceptable in a world with humankind at its centre; they underline the flawed nature of the zero-sum policies practised in the past, when the great Powers dedicated themselves to amassing wealth by exploiting the riches of poorer, weaker nations.

Widespread poverty is not good for poor nations, and even less so for rich nations. As all know, poverty leads to despair, violence and chaos. That, in turn, produces unbearable social and political tensions and the outbreak of conflicts, leading to failed States. When a State fails, the conflict raging within spills over into regional conflicts or prompts endless, unstoppable waves of migrants. In today's world, a failed State eventually becomes an issue before the United Nations, requiring attention and solutions.

When one has examined how that chain of events works, it becomes clear that achieving the Millennium Development Goals is crucial.

Allow me to underline the following. It is alarming that in 2015, the year in which the Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved, the production of oil — the fuel that enabled the world to achieve spectacular growth over the past 100 years — is projected to begin to decline dangerously. To foresee the future, one has only to take a good look at the present. All the world's Governments face difficulties caused by high oil prices, and we are all aware that this time, unlike the oil shock of the 1970s, the present reduction in the flow of oil could become permanent. I emphasize this because, owing to that situation, our nations risk facing endless difficulties on all fronts.

It is disturbing that this should happen precisely when we are making enormous efforts to overcome the obstacles preventing us from creating a dignified, free and safe society for our peoples. The predicted global crisis could bring an ongoing reduction in oil production, immediately causing higher oil prices. The catastrophic effects that would produce cannot be ignored today. We have known for a long time that oil would not last forever. Now is the time for the United Nations to launch an initiative, much broader in scope than the Millennium Development Goals, to chart a course guiding Member States to a civilization not dependent on oil.

My country, the Dominican Republic, shares the small Caribbean island of Hispaniola with Haiti. It has to be said that, historically, the problems on one side of the border have tended to become problems for the other side. Haiti, a country with a 200-year history of independence, is a fractured nation today. Amid insurmountable economic difficulties and all types of social shortfalls, its political conflicts weakened its institutions, and the State collapsed.

Today's transitional regime, without enough resources to function properly, is, with the support of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, striving greatly to rebuild what was destroyed, and the international community has put great hope in restoring legitimate political authority through the holding of elections.

In the General Assembly and elsewhere, many have said that they believe that the electoral process in Haiti should not have been given top priority; rather,

top priority should have gone to humanitarian assistance and job creation by means of a massive programme for building infrastructure such as roads, water supply systems, schools, hospitals and electric generators. However, past experience in the process of rebuilding failed States points to the priority need to legitimize new political leadership through elections, even though we know that in such cases, the ideal framework for holding elections cannot be achieved.

That is why, on behalf of my country's President, Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, I propose that the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, with the support of the Transitional Government of Haiti and the international community, should carry out — as they have been doing — a broad national dialogue to reach general agreement between the political forces and the organized sectors of Haitian civil society.

Such an agreement would ensure national reconciliation and prepare the way for a national reconstruction plan that has the support of all Haitian leadership. All Haitian civil society and political leadership have important roles to play in their country's institutional reconstruction, and all must fulfil those responsibilities. We cannot ignore the fact that in recent years, the Haitian people have been living in fear, insecurity, poverty and despair. For recovery to take place, the people need to have confidence in the process of peace, reconciliation and the rebuilding of State institutions.

In addition, President Fernandez proposes that the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) invite distinguished world leaders to be present during the elections in Haiti, in order to give more credibility to the electoral process.

Among these statesmen, the Dominican Republic takes the liberty of suggesting Presidents Fox of Mexico and Lula da Silva of Brazil, the former Presidents of the United States of America, Mr. Carter and Mr. Clinton, and the legendary former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela.

Elections are the first important political step to help Haiti back on its feet. We are not under the illusion that elections alone will guarantee security, ensure the reign of democracy in the immediate future or produce an overnight improvement in the living conditions of Haitians.

Our own experience has taught us that the road to democracy will be a long one, as it has been for the nations that today function within the framework of democratic institutions. And the road towards development will be even longer but more secure, if tensions are reduced, a climate of cooperation is fostered and if donor nations and institutions faithfully fulfil their generous promises of financial support for Haiti in a timely manner.

On the subject of peace, security and dialogue, we want to comment on two items that are very high on the international political agenda. First, the progress made in the peace process between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority.

Secondly, the recent natural disasters in Asia and now in the United States of America are forcing us to think about the vulnerability of nations to the potentially dangerous, manmade changes in the balance of nature when faced with these types of events. We sincerely regret the loss of life due to Hurricane Katrina.

In conclusion, I would like to say that we must not lose time. Let us act today, as if this were our last opportunity to reach a consensus and formulate action to turn sustainable development into a collective achievement in order to ensure world security and progress together on the road to peace.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Youssouf Ouedraogo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Ouedraogo (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): Burkina Faso is delighted to see this important session of the General Assembly being presided over by an illustrious son of a great country, Sweden, with which we have maintained exemplary and fruitful relations of friendship and cooperation for several decades.

I hasten to assure the President of the full cooperation of my delegation. It is also my pleasure to pay a tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, whose talents as a seasoned and effective diplomat we have been able to appreciate throughout the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

I would like to associate in this tribute the Secretary-General, a man of great vision, who has been the architect of this new United Nations that we have

so earnestly sought and who has had the courage to lay its foundations.

The current session will receive specific notice in the annals of the United Nations. Apart from its coinciding with both the midterm review of the Millennium Development Goals and the reform of the Organization, this session is also being held at a watershed in world history and international relations.

In Africa, despite the constant efforts of States and regional groupings, the persistence of numerous conflicts and hot spots continues to be a subject of major concern. I am thinking particularly of the situation in the Great Lakes Region, Darfur, Somalia and Côte d'Ivoire. In the Middle East, the struggle for survival is the daily battle of the Palestinian people. It is our conviction that only the strict implementation of the Road Map will make peace possible in that sorely tried region.

The numerous terrorist acts throughout the world claim our attention and remind us of how vulnerable we are in the face of terrorism. We must, henceforth, realize that no strategy, no matter how energetic it might be, will be able to wipe out this scourge, unless it attacks the underlying causes, which are injustice, exclusion, humiliation and poverty. It is quite obvious that desperate behaviour stems from those sources.

More than ever, the quest for democracy, good governance and respect for human rights has become part and parcel of the daily behaviour of peoples and nations. It is this vision that makes it so necessary that unprecedented reform be carried out of the United Nations, which, 60 years after its creation, is duty bound to take full account of the new challenges and new problems that have arisen. In this connection, once again we should welcome the Secretary-General's lucidity and farsightedness, whose report "In Larger Freedom" (A/59/2005) gives us a thought-provoking framework, indicating that comprehensive and thorough reform is essential for our Organization.

Furthermore, the African position on this reform, particularly that relating to the Security Council, is now well known. Burkina Faso is convinced that justice must be done to Africa and has fully joined the other members of the African Union to formulate a common platform that will make it possible for Africa to reclaim without hesitation its legitimate place in the essential United Nations decision-making bodies.

Nevertheless, however committed and however passionate our debate is on the reform of the United Nations, it is of paramount importance that we give even greater priority to the question of development.

Speaking of development, as is so aptly pointed out in the final document of the High-level Meeting that we have just adopted, it is not so much promises and commitments that are lacking but rather their diligent and consistent fulfilment, given the urgency and acuteness of the problems we face. Under these circumstances, Burkina Faso willingly associates itself with all activities that promote genuine international solidarity.

That is why we have associated ourselves with President Lula da Silva's anti-hunger initiative. That is also why we support President Jacques Chirac's international solidarity contribution initiative involving an airline ticket levy, which is aimed at helping to finance the struggle against AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria; Prime Minister Tony Blair's International Finance Facility; Qatar's Fund for Development and Humanitarian Assistance; and President George W. Bush's Millennium Challenge Account, of which my country has just become a beneficiary.

Burkina Faso also welcomes the G-8's recent decision to cancel the multilateral debts of a number of developing countries. We hope that additional countries will be included on that list.

There can be no doubt that trade relations between industrialized and developing countries continue to be marred by inequality — even inequity. It is therefore essential to recall the need to respect the rules of the multilateral trading system, which are the foundation of the World Trade Organization.

It should therefore be clear why Burkina Faso continues to demand an end to the unfair export subsidies of the countries of the North, particularly as concerns cotton.

Burkina Faso is a staunch proponent of democracy, good governance, respect for human rights, and peace and development in Africa and throughout the world. In that context, it is actively involved in peacekeeping operations in Africa and in other regions. Furthermore, my country, which currently holds the chairmanship of the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States and of the International Organization of La Francophonie, is proud to serve the cause of regional

integration and of international brotherhood and solidarity.

We believe that working for peace also means respecting international conventions. We therefore believe it to be our duty to discharge our international obligations by acceding to most of the relevant agreements and treaties, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which Burkina Faso has signed and ratified. I should like to take this opportunity to encourage other countries to do likewise in order to speed up the coming into force of that legal instrument, whose importance for world peace and stability is fully evident.

I hardly need recall that the current session's leitmotif is the democratization of the United Nations. It is therefore rather difficult to understand how we can continue to disregard the rights of 23 million Taiwanese people. The time has come to deal justly with that people, which for decades now has demonstrated its commitment to democracy, peace and international solidarity.

Today more than ever, the fate of humankind is in our hands. Moving in concert, in the same direction and inspired by the same principles, we must assume our new common responsibility: to build a world in larger freedom, with development, security and dignity for all.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nyan Win, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of Myanmar.

Mr. Win (Myanmar): I wish first of all to congratulate Mr. Jan Eliasson on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. We are convinced that, given his extensive experience in international relations, this session will have a fruitful outcome. My delegation pledges its support and full cooperation in his endeavours for the success of this historic session. I should like also to convey to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, deep appreciation for his efforts in promoting the noble ideals and causes of our Organization.

The strength of our Organization lies in its universality and legitimacy, anchored in the Charter of the United Nations and in the fundamental principles of international law. Among these cardinal principles are respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and

equality of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and the non-use or threat of use of force.

International issues today are of such a scale and complexity that they can be resolved only through multilateralism and by collective action founded on the values of solidarity and universality, as embodied in the United Nations. Only by working together can we hope to discharge our responsibilities. We must at the same time ensure the Organization's credibility by adapting it to the global realities of the twenty-first century.

The High-level Plenary Meeting provided a useful impetus towards meeting the goals and challenges of the twenty-first century. The outcome document of the 2005 world summit included measures to strengthen the United Nations. My delegation wishes to underscore the need to preserve and promote the centrality of the General Assembly as the highest deliberative and decision-making organ of the United Nations. Myanmar also agrees that the Security Council should be reformed to reflect world realities so as to be more effective. Since the Council has primary responsibility for world peace and security, the process of its expansion should be managed with the utmost seriousness. Any decision in that respect should be arrived on the basis of the broadest possible agreement of the membership.

In the context of the reform process, we must avoid the introduction of new concepts that have no basis either in the Charter or in international law. Acceptance of such concepts would go against the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference, which form the very basis of the system of international relations.

I am happy to see that the outcome document contains elements that we hold dear. The document underscores in particular the obligation of all Member States to refrain from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations. Charter provisions provide the necessary principles for the use of force as a last resort. We have always strongly held the view that Article 51 of the Charter, which deals with the right of individual or collective self-defence, should not be rewritten or reinterpreted.

We believe, however, that there some areas remain that should be further revisited in order to address our concerns.

Regarding the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission as an intergovernmental advisory body, we feel strongly that there must be adequate representation by developing countries in the Organizational Committee. Developing countries have a strong case, since they are major contributors of military personnel and civilian police to United Nations missions.

In strengthening human rights mechanisms, we must address the root causes of problems, namely, the use of selectivity, double standards and politicization. It must be borne in mind that the Charter places human rights in the context of international cooperation. During this session, we will be considering the mandate, modalities, function, size, composition, membership, working methods and procedures of the envisaged Human Rights Council. Given the importance that we all place on human rights, developing countries must play an active role in the negotiation process. We would like to see the initiation of open, transparent and inclusive negotiations at an early date.

The threats we face today do not respect national boundaries; they are interconnected and complex. Terrorism, illicit drug trafficking, transnational organized crime, weapons of mass destruction, poverty and hunger, and the alarming spread of highly infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria are some of the threats we can ignore only at our peril. Efforts and strategies to tackle transnational issues need to be coordinated at all levels and carried out with the necessary respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

My country is a State party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementary Protocols to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, and against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air. It has enacted legislation to control money laundering and to render mutual legal assistance to combat transnational crime. It is a State party to almost all of the United Nations conventions on terrorism. It has also actively participated in regional and international efforts against international crime.

Myanmar is against all forms and manifestations of terrorism. Myanmar is of the view that terrorism should be combated in accordance with international law and obligations. The issue should not be used as a

pretext for intervention in the internal affairs of other States.

Sixty years after the Second World War, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, particularly of nuclear weapons, remains a formidable challenge. Nuclear proliferation is on the increase, and there is also considerable concern that non-State actors could gain access to such materials and technologies. All States must take action in a multilateral framework to make substantive progress towards disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, and nuclear-weapon States should reaffirm their commitment to negative security assurances vis-à-vis non-nuclear States. The outcome document, however, failed to address the important issue of disarmament and non-proliferation. This is an issue of great importance, and we should make every effort to ensure that this vital issue is not sidelined in international forums.

At the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, on narcotic drugs, it was emphasized that no single State can combat the scourge of narcotic drugs on its own. In my country, the problem of narcotic drugs is a bitter colonial legacy. We have therefore made the elimination of narcotic drugs a national responsibility and have formulated strategies and tactics to end the problem of opium poppy cultivation through a 15-year comprehensive plan and the supplementary New Destiny Project. These efforts have resulted in a drastic reduction in opium poppy production. As a result, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported a 73 per cent decline between 1996 and 2004. Myanmar's efforts to eradicate poppy cultivation, opium and heroin production and drug trafficking and abuse complement the objectives set forth by the United Nations. Myanmar is also taking urgent measures with its neighbouring countries to exercise control over illegally trafficked precursor chemicals used in the production of synthetic drugs. We have developed bilateral, trilateral and multilateral cooperation in the subregional, regional and international contexts.

World leaders pledged in the Millennium Declaration that the world of 2015 would be better than the one in which we live today. They made a solemn commitment to implement the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). To achieve the MDGs, both the developed and the developing countries must act in a cooperative manner. The developed countries, in particular, must fulfil their commitments and meet

the internationally agreed official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product. Debt relief must also be provided to developing countries, including grant-based financing and 100 per cent debt cancellation.

In Myanmar, we are making satisfactory progress towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. In our drive to eradicate poverty we have achieved significant results through the designation of 24 special development zones in the states and divisions of the country, in order to achieve equitable and balanced development throughout the country. Myanmar is endeavouring to achieve development mainly relying on its own resources without assistance, particularly from international financial institutions. With external financial assistance, however, our development efforts can be accelerated.

Myanmar is a multi-ethnic nation comprising over 100 races. Immediately after independence, the country had to face the scourge of insurgency. This has posed a serious impediment to our national development endeavours. Based on the bitter lessons of the past, we have today embarked on a programme to make law, order and national stability prevail. As we are able to build peace and stability, we have been able to focus our attention on economic development, giving priority to human resource development. While endeavouring to achieve comprehensive development of the country, we are at the same time implementing a seven-step political programme for a smooth transition to a democratic State.

In this regard, understanding and support from the international community would enable us to achieve our cherished goal more expeditiously. Unwarranted pressures will, however, delay our progress. We, for our part, are resolute in our determination to achieve our goal of establishing a modern democratic State.

Myanmar is poised on the threshold of a new era. We are at a point when all our attention must be devoted to crossing the threshold and entering a new era.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Michael Frendo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Malta.

Mr. Frendo (Malta): I would first like to congratulate Mr. Jan Eliasson upon his election to the

presidency of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. He has an important and challenging task ahead. In carrying out his duties, he can be assured of my full support and of that of the Maltese delegation.

I take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the outgoing President of the fifty-ninth session, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping. The last 12 months have demanded exceptional leadership and commitment from the presidency of the General Assembly. I wish to join others in congratulating Mr. Ping on the firm and successful way in which he has guided this Assembly in the preparations leading to the summit which was just concluded.

The summit has passed on to us significant tasks in the continuing endeavour to sustain and reinforce the processes of multilateral cooperation. It is right that we should take as the central theme of our discussions the follow-up and implementation of the summit conclusions.

In the light of the discussions our leaders had last week, we approach these responsibilities all the more inspired by the imperative for collective action. Such action is incumbent on the international community, as much in dealing with the short-term challenges it has to overcome as in defining the long-term objectives which it seeks to achieve.

Among the most immediate and visible challenges confronting us is the way in which we respond to the natural disasters which at one time or another engulf peoples and societies around the world. The past 12 months have produced awesome evidence of the way in which humanity remains subject to the forces of nature.

The tsunami late last year and Hurricane Katrina only a few weeks ago are only the most prominent among recent major catastrophes which intensify both our sense of vulnerability and our sense of solidarity. In extending our expression of grief and sympathy to the Governments and people afflicted by such disasters, the Maltese people have also extended their offers of succour and relief.

While times like these remind us that nature can be unpredictable in its ferocity, they also teach us that it must always be treated with respect. If managed responsibly, nature's resources can improve our lives considerably. However, if those resources are

ruthlessly exploited, humanity will be the ultimate loser.

It is unfortunate but true that the blind forces of nature are not the only cause of extensive suffering among fellow human beings. Political and economic developments, over which Governments, individually or collectively, have at least some element of control, are also factors in play. Nowhere are the combination of natural and man-made causes more dramatic than in those instances of unregulated and often tragic migration flows.

Over the last few years, Malta, like many countries, has been caught in the worrisome increase of unregulated human trafficking across the Mediterranean. In our case, as a small island with a very high population density, the problem quickly assumed crisis proportions.

Malta has a strong and longstanding commitment to help those who need humanitarian assistance. We shall stand by that. We are deeply conscious that long-term action in this area needs to be premised on profound respect for human dignity and strict adherence to the rule of law, including international humanitarian law.

However, the international community must not allow the rights of refugees and persons requiring humanitarian status in accordance with international law to be undermined and prejudiced by international criminal organizations specialized in human trafficking activity. In our case, our ability to respond to genuine cases is fast becoming overwhelmed by the huge increase in illegal immigrants, who are the object of an international criminal network of human traffickers.

Illegal immigration constitutes a collapse of the international legal order and must be addressed unequivocally by the world community as such in order to ensure that the rule of international law is restored in that regard. Countries of origin and transit need to assume their responsibility to uphold the rule of law by vigorously clamping down on international criminal activity in human trafficking. The United Nations and its agencies, particularly the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, are called on to address this issue, which, if it is not addressed, could prejudice the rights of genuine refugees and persons qualifying for humanitarian status in accordance with international law.

At the same time, the spirit of solidarity inspiring action in this area needs also to be put to use in addressing the roots of illegal economic migration, a phenomenon that is harmful not only to the individuals themselves — who fall victim to callous criminal organizations, often paying with their lives — but also to the economic and social development of the countries of origin.

For that reason, we welcome the summit statement reaffirming the principle of solidarity and burden-sharing with regard to assisting genuine refugee populations and their host communities. In that context, we look forward to the General Assembly's high-level dialogue on international migration and development, to take place in 2006. It will give us an important further opportunity to discuss the multidimensional aspects of that problem and identify appropriate ways of dealing with them. Malta will take an active and constructive part in that dialogue.

Last week's summit provided important new guidelines in many critical areas requiring collective action. In the area of development cooperation, there has been a rededication to the objectives first defined in the Millennium Development Goals. Malta joins its partners in the European Union in strengthening its commitment towards increased and more effective development assistance in the coming years. We have set ambitious goals for the successful completion by next year of the World Trade Organization's Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations.

Malta's national contribution will be commensurate with its possibilities and its level of economic development. Nevertheless, it will take inspiration from our constant endeavour to strengthen and enlarge the areas of peace, prosperity and security for all peoples of the world. We will have a renewed opportunity to reaffirm those commitments in November, when Malta hosts the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and assumes the chairmanship of the Commonwealth for the next two years.

Peace and prosperity must be rooted in human dignity. Our leaders devoted a significant part of their discussions last week to the question of human rights. The summit decisions on this subject may not have gone as far as some of us would have wished. Nevertheless, they were an important step towards the objective of equipping the United Nations with a more

effective institutional structure to deal with the defence and promotion of human rights worldwide. In the current session of the General Assembly, we will aim to bring to fruition the summit's decisions in the area of human rights, especially the establishment of the Human Rights Council.

Another area where questions of human dignity are of paramount importance relates to the principle of the responsibility to protect. Our leaders have taken a brave step by reconciling the different strands of that principle, which seeks to encapsulate an important moral duty in the development of the law of nations. Respect for State sovereignty, the strict parameters on the use of force and the overarching commitment to respect and defend human dignity and the right to life owed to all individual human beings are all vital aspects of the decisions taken by the summit in this regard. Further work in that area must continue to be inspired by the sense of solidarity which is shared by people around the world and the common, worldwide ethical responsibility to act to defend the innocent.

Effective post-conflict peacebuilding is an important dimension in which the international community can give practical expression to the notion of collective responsibility. We therefore strongly welcome the agreement to establish the Peacebuilding Commission, which underlines and reinforces the United Nations capacity in the area of peacekeeping and peacebuilding. That is an area of international cooperation where the interface between action at the regional and global levels is critical. The task entrusted to us by the summit to finalize the modalities of the Peacebuilding Commission by December this year is among the most far-reaching responsibilities of the current session of the General Assembly.

Another area where international cooperation is especially important concerns the fight against terrorism. Notwithstanding the differences that might remain on the precise interpretation and scope of the concept, there is a widespread commitment to resisting and eliminating that outrageous and horrific attack on the everyday order and serenity of life in our societies and the right of ordinary people to a secure and peaceful life. On the basis of that recognition, we urge immediate steps to intensify and expand concrete actions that respond to the immediate concerns of our citizens. The elements of a counter-terrorism strategy announced by the Secretary-General earlier this year provide a useful pointer in the right direction.

We need to take our collective action against terrorism further. Malta believes that no terrorist action is ever excusable, and our action against terrorism must be unequivocal, firm and decisive at all times and in all instances. However, we must deeply analyse and examine the roots of the problem. In particular, we must not be passive when we see situations around the world where States have been unable to provide a social welfare net for their peoples and where, as a consequence, the poor and the desperate conglomerate around extremist organizations, which may also practice terror while simultaneously providing welfare assistance to strengthen their popular base. Social responsibility for the provision of welfare should be in the hands of the State, which represents society in all its diversity. In my view, it is imperative that international development programmes should also have that particular focus. The ultimate objective of the current session of the General Assembly should continue to be progress towards the conclusion of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

Aside from agreeing on a new set of tasks and measures for reform, at last week's summit our leaders reaffirmed and further developed the concepts and principles that lie at the heart of the United Nations. Those concepts and principles will inspire the deliberations of the Assembly's current session as it considers the many specific issues on its agenda.

Issues of peace and security are a major part of that agenda. They are particularly poignant today, the International Day of Peace.

Malta welcomes the recent evolution of the situation in Palestine, marked by Israel's disengagement from the occupied territories in Gaza and parts of the West Bank. We urge the parties concerned to maintain the momentum for peace that has been created. We acknowledge and salute the bold and tough decisions taken by both the Israeli and the Palestinian leadership, which are making this development possible. We have a clear sense of the complexities and sensitivities involved for both sides in pursuing their respective actions.

Together with our partners in the European Union, Malta wishes to encourage this latest development as a path towards the full resumption of the Middle East peace process. This calls for a continuing determination by both sides not to allow obstacles to stand in the way of their carrying out the

next set of actions called for under the Quartet road map: Israel's freezing of all settlement activity, and the cessation of all violent attacks by Palestinians against Israelis everywhere.

We are convinced that the ultimate objective — the existence of two neighbouring, viable sovereign States, living in peace and security, is within reach and certainly worth the effort and sacrifice involved at this stage.

In the Mediterranean, regional cooperation continues to be strengthened through the Barcelona process and other initiatives for subregional consultation. Within the broader framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, countries to the north and the south of the Mediterranean are working together on a wide range of actions to further peace, prosperity and progress in their region.

Those actions include areas of primary interest for Malta and its immediate neighbours, such as the management of migration flows, the promotion of human rights, democratization, counter-proliferation and counter-terrorism efforts, the acceleration of increased market integration and the objective of improving the social and economic living conditions of all peoples in the region, especially the most vulnerable among them. The further economic, social and political integration of the Euro-Mediterranean region is the primary challenge of the countries belonging to it and would have beneficial consequences for the international community as a whole.

Malta is particularly interested in developments relating to the future enlargement of the European Union. Following the entry of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, the next stages of that process could encompass a number of countries in our region, such as Croatia and Turkey. Malta believes that the further enlargement of the Union would provide an impetus for positive reform in European countries in general and for the creation of a wider European area of peace, stability, democracy and human rights dedicated to the prosperity of its peoples in a spirit of solidarity.

Malta welcomes the fact that the European Union is increasingly acting as a promoter of peace and cooperation in regions beyond its immediate vicinity. That is the case with regard to the framework for wider cooperation provided by the Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

The expansion of political rights and political participation is an essential dimension of the broader strategy to combat extremism in its various manifestations throughout the world. Malta welcomes the intensifying transatlantic engagement in this regard which, especially in the Middle East, seeks to foster wider participation in support of home-grown economic, political and educational reform efforts for societies in the region.

The European Union is also cooperating increasingly with the African Union in the implementation of actions and decisions agreed within the framework of the United Nations. We hope that that encouraging development will further reinforce the many peacekeeping, humanitarian relief and reconciliation efforts under way in many parts of the African continent.

The institutional set-up and functioning of the United Nations have been the subject of intense scrutiny in recent months. This has laid bare some of the weaknesses of our Organization. At the same time, it has highlighted the many areas in which our Organization is playing a unique and indispensable role in the process of multilateral cooperation. Regrettably, instances of human and institutional failures have been brought to light. At the same time, the much larger number of instances where the institutions are working well and where individuals are acting with admirable commitment and dedication have also been given prominence. In particular, developments in recent months have placed in a sharper focus the commitment and dedication of the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in carrying out his exceptionally complex and demanding task.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our deepest admiration and support for the Secretary-General for the major contribution that he has been making towards effective multilateralism and respect for the international rule of law.

Our challenges have never been as global as they are today. Recent natural disasters have emphasized to all of us our vulnerability as the human race. Globalization in all its aspects, including global communication, has not only brought home to us the immediacy of events and information, but has also further accelerated dynamic change in all aspects — political, economic and social — in all societies on Earth. The situation of constant flux and dynamic

change further increases the need for the United Nations to be a reformed, effective focal point for the international community, one that is ready to respond to, and proactively work to meet, the challenges of peace, security and development.

This year, which marks the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations, it is useful for us to approach the exercise of reform keeping in mind the words of the Secretary-General in his report, "In larger freedom", that

"the principles and purposes of the United Nations, as set out in the Charter, remain as valid and relevant today as they were in 1945, and that the present moment is a precious opportunity to put them into practice". (A/59/2005, para. 153).

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ramesh Nath Pandey, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Nepal.

Mr. Pandey (Nepal): The recently concluded High-level Plenary Meeting has rekindled the hopes and aspirations of humanity for enduring peace, security and development. The outcome document (resolution 60/1) is a testimony to our shared vision, collective wisdom and renewed commitment to global partnership to address the most pressing challenges of the twenty-first century. The commitments to eradicate poverty, to resolutely fight against terrorism and to bring about the timely reform of the United Nations as the pivot of multilateralism, can be achieved and translated into action only by our working together.

The outcome document has reaffirmed the world's topmost priority — combating terrorism — as the most pressing global issue. Terrorism is not just the problem of a few countries; it is a threat to world peace and stability. In today's interconnected and interlinked world, terrorism does not remain confined within geographical borders. Its reverberations have been felt far and wide. As every act of terrorism defies basic human values, we must deal with it resolutely, firmly and comprehensively, without double standards or selective interpretations.

As a country that has been suffering from senseless and brutal terrorism for a decade, Nepal unequivocally condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and supports the early conclusion of a comprehensive convention against international terrorism.

His Majesty the King's commitment to multiparty democracy is unflinching and total. His Majesty is determined to re-energize multiparty democratic institutions by restoring sustainable peace and making democracy meaningful, mature, cultured and refined. To that end, we will be holding municipal elections by April 2006, to be followed by national parliamentary elections within two years. That will be an important step forward in re-energizing our democratic institutions through free and fair elections. I urge the countries and organizations which support democracy to come forward and help us to conduct free and fair elections. His Majesty's Government is ready to welcome international observers for the elections. Democracy has been sustained not only as a system of governance but also as a way of life in all parts of the world.

The beauty of our planet lies in its diversity. We reaffirm the acknowledgement in paragraph 135 of the outcome document that, while democracies share common features, there is no single model of democracy. Sovereign countries and peoples must be allowed to have every right to choose the system of democratic governance that is suitable to their needs and aspirations.

His Majesty King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev recently stated that the use of force alone is not a solution, and that the solution rather lies in talks. We are convinced that lasting peace can be achieved only through dialogue based on trust and confidence. But any overtone must be credible and sincere enough to dispel all doubts and suspicions surrounding it. This is our principled position: to work with all constitutional forces in efforts towards establishing durable peace and stability in our country.

His Majesty's Government has initiated programmes to alleviate the plight of people suffering as a result of conflict. The Government has accorded top priority to implementing programmes for broad-based economic growth, social inclusion, anti-corruption efforts and the speedy delivery of essential services to needy people. Special relief package programmes are being carried in an integrated manner to the areas hit by conflict; these include food, shelter, health, education and the rehabilitation of persons internally displaced due to terrorist violence.

International peace and security can be maintained only in an atmosphere of mutual

understanding, trust and confidence. Nepal has always stressed that the international community must make genuine efforts for the general and complete disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction, including biological, chemical, nuclear and radiological weapons, in a time-bound manner. However, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and slow progress in global disarmament negotiations have weakened hopes for a safer and more secure world.

We firmly believe that regional mechanisms, including the establishment of United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament in various parts of the world, can make a significant contribution to global disarmament efforts by enhancing confidence-building. Our commitment is reflected in Nepal's ardent desire to relocate the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific to Kathmandu at the earliest possible date and to continuously pursue the Kathmandu process as a part of the world disarmament campaign.

The role of the United Nations in peacekeeping, peacemaking and post-conflict peacebuilding has assumed great significance over the years. Nepal has been continuously participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations since 1958 and has already contributed more than 50,000 peacekeepers to 29 United Nations peacekeeping missions. With its current deployment of around 3,500 peacekeepers in 13 peacekeeping missions, Nepal ranks among the top five countries contributing troops to the United Nations peacekeeping missions. The sacrifice of the lives of 54 Nepali peacekeepers in the service of humanity in difficult conflict zones around the world stands as testimony to their dedication to the cause of world peace.

Nepalese Blue Helmets have earned international repute for their dedication, discipline, impartiality and professionalism in the discharge of their duties. This is reflected in the inclusion of a Nepali peacekeeper in the United Nations team that went to Stockholm to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, and in the several excellent honours and awards that have been accorded to them, the most recent being in the Central African State of Burundi. Over the years, our peacekeepers have also been involved in peacebuilding, reconstruction and rehabilitation exercises in various United Nations missions.

Nepal welcomes the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission as an intergovernmental advisory body. This, we believe, will be instrumental to United Nations efforts in effecting sustained recovery and reconstruction and will provide guidance and assistance in laying the foundation for lasting peace in countries emerging from conflict. The Commission's mission, objectives and goals should be clearly defined; there should be equitable representation from among the troop-contributing countries; and the Commission should be adequately funded.

Nepal is unswervingly committed to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and its contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security. After almost two decades, Nepal is seeking non-permanent membership of the Security Council for the period 2007-2008; we have an earnest desire to contribute to the Council in its important role in the maintenance of international peace and security. I take this opportunity to renew our appeal to Member States for their invaluable support to Nepal in the elections slated for next year.

Nepal is fully committed to the protection and promotion of human rights. We view all human rights as universal, indivisible and interdependent. I wish to reiterate His Majesty's Government's commitment to the implementation of human rights instruments and international humanitarian law through the strengthening of national human rights institutions and through full cooperation with United Nations human rights mechanisms. The human rights situation in Nepal needs to be properly understood in the context of the unabated violence perpetrated by the terrorists. The tendency to equate the constitutional duty of the Government to protect the lives and property of ordinary citizens with that of the dreadful acts of the terrorists needs to be corrected. The terrorists have exceeded all norms and values by resorting to the most heinous acts of violence, indiscriminate killings, the maiming and abduction of innocent civilians, kidnapping and the forceful recruitment of children as soldiers and extortion and intimidation of the civilian population.

We have been providing asylum to more than 100,000 Bhutanese refugees on humanitarian grounds for a decade and a half. His Majesty's Government has shown its honesty and sincerity and has walked the extra mile for the solution of the refugee problem through a bilateral process. We strongly believe that

sincere implementation of bilateral agreements will lead to a lasting solution of the problem. We believe that a lasting solution to the refugee problem will have a salutary impact on Nepal-Bhutan relations, which emanate from monarchical cultures.

Nepal's peace and stability have a great bearing not only on its own people but also on its neighbours and on South Asia and beyond. A stable, peaceful and prosperous Nepal, small in size but strategically located, can greatly contribute to maintaining sustainable peace, stability and prosperity in the region and beyond.

The world has seen that peace and stability in the world community cannot be guaranteed without the peace, stability and prosperity of smaller and vulnerable States. Therefore, the international community must come forward to help countries with special needs, such as least developed and landlocked developing countries, to help them achieve peace, stability and prosperity. The new international financial and development architecture should, therefore, address the legitimate interests and aspirations of those countries.

We call upon the developed countries to augment the level of official development assistance (ODA) and to provide better market access, increased foreign direct investment and substantial debt relief measures to alleviate the hardships of developing countries, especially the least developed and the landlocked ones. We urge the international community to come forward with technical assistance to meet the special needs of the small, landlocked and fragile States with special challenges emanating from terrorism and natural disasters.

Nepal's location between the two fastest-growing economies — India and China — provides us with tremendous opportunities for economic growth and development. We have proposed Nepal as a transit point between our two neighbours, acting as a bridge between them to realize their full economic potential.

Nepal firmly believes that only a strengthened and revitalized United Nations can address the multitude of challenges of the contemporary world. Timely reform and necessary restructuring of the United Nations, preserving and promoting the centrality and sanctity of the principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter, are needed to make the world body more robust and vibrant. Nepal has always looked

to the United Nations as a torchbearer for peace, security and the dignity of nations. It is also our firm view that United Nations reform should give more emphasis to strengthening the Organization's role in promoting international cooperation for the economic and social development of Member States, particularly the developing countries.

Nepal has consistently supported the reform of the Security Council, including its method of work, to make it more representative, transparent and accountable, in order to reflect present-day realities. We have also maintained that the General Assembly, as the principal deliberative organ of the United Nations, needs to be further strengthened.

The six-decade-long journey of the United Nations has been arduous and at times even tumultuous. It has seen high expectations, deep frustration and the harsh realities of realpolitik but has never floundered or wavered from its noble objectives.

This year marks the fiftieth year of Nepal's membership of the United Nations. Since we joined the United Nations, on 14 December 1955, Nepal has cherished its association with the world body and has played an active role in its activities. The Nepali people are proud of their association with the world body and are celebrating the occasion in a special way befitting its significance. Nepal acknowledges its sincere appreciation of the United Nations and its various specialized agencies for their most valuable contribution to our socio-economic development endeavours.

We reaffirm our solemn pledge to the Charter of the United Nations and renew our unwavering commitment to make the Organization more equitable, credible and relevant to face effectively the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sergei Martynov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

Mr. Martynov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The summit of our leaders is over. Each of us here at the General Assembly has different feelings about it. Mine, I must say, are anxiety and hope. I am anxious not about the future of the United Nations as an Organization — its existence, after all, is not an end in itself — but about what the future of the United Nations holds.

I place my hope in the future of the United Nations, because the present does not evoke unbridled optimism. There is but one source of optimism for all of us: that the summit, just finished, may serve as a wake-up call for us.

Ernest Hemingway, an American who lived in Europe, evoked John Donne, who wrote, "never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee". This turned out to be appallingly apt. Hemingway's "For Whom the Bell Tolls" was written in the late 1930s and is set at the time and in the country where Guernica was destroyed. It is no coincidence that a depiction of that destruction hangs outside the Security Council Chamber. We all know what happened afterwards: from the ruins of the world the United Nations emerged.

Belarus is not a doomsayer. Indeed, we ourselves experienced the utter horror of the Second World War in greater measure than anyone else and we do not want to see it repeated. But during the sixtieth anniversary year of the victory and of the founding of the United Nations, it is quite appropriate to recall these things.

I do not want to state the obvious: that the United Nations is the Organization of all States, large and small, rich and poor. In this Organization everyone has equal rights and all work together to create the main product: peace. Yet I have to mention this because under the banner of reform there is a move to turn our Organization — *de facto* and *de jure* — into an instrument for the domination of some States by others. We all have witnessed this.

A short while ago it was officially proposed that we approve a new decision-making procedure for the specialized agencies: those who pay more would have more votes. Now it is being proposed that we elect members to the main human rights body of the United Nations on the basis of subjective criteria. This is a dangerous trend, and a deviation from the United Nations Charter. It will lead to the splintering of the United Nations.

Does the United Nations really need reform which creates preconditions for the more frequent and more arbitrary use of force at the sole discretion of the mighty? We are against reform which would turn the Organization created out of the ashes of the Second World War into an instrument of diktat by the militarily and economically most powerful States. Does the

United Nations need reform which would divide countries into those "worthy" and those "unworthy" of international assistance, into pupils and teachers in matters of governance and social development? We do not want such reform.

To preserve and build upon the core values of the United Nations Charter, taking into account the realities of today, is the major task of genuine reform that our Organization really needs. The diversity of routes to progress is among those core values. At the summit, the President of the Republic of Belarus stressed that this can ensure the stability of the world and is an enduring value of our civilization (see A/60/PV.5). In today's unipolar world, this value is not only belittled but challenged as well.

What is behind the calls we heard in this Hall last week to "help those who wish to help themselves"? In practice this is a selective approach which recognizes the right to development only for those countries which have adopted government and economic reforms in accordance with a strictly defined model. Let us consider whether we need to clone this model the world over. Does it represent the strength and the value of our civilization? Does it represent the value of the United Nations? What can this one-sided world give to people? Will it be a comfortable home for our children?

Today, as never before, we need to take an honest look at our world, which would allow us to discuss critical problems in a free and transparent manner and to look together for ways to solve them.

An honest look at today's world, for instance, would not allow us to overlook the problem of trafficking in human beings. This disgrace of the twenty-first century has overtaken all regions of the world. The most vulnerable — women and children, whose protection should be the priority task of the United Nations — serve as living merchandise. Forced adolescent labour, the sexual enslavement of women and girls and trafficking in human organs should be decisively opposed by all States and prohibited in their legislation.

There is much to do in this sphere. Today, after all, fewer than half of Member States have ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. Just over a dozen countries have adopted national strategies or action plans to combat trafficking in human beings.

But it will be possible to turn this social evil back only through a universal effort. In that respect, we consider it extremely important that all parties involved in that criminal trade be held responsible, including the consumers of those human commodities. It is high time for us to launch a decisive and organized campaign at the United Nations against all forms of trafficking in and exploitation of human beings, and to forge a global partnership against slavery and trafficking in human beings in the twenty-first century.

Looking honestly at today's world we cannot ignore the long-term effects of the Chernobyl disaster. The largest manmade disaster of the twentieth century, it has negatively impacted on the lives of millions of people and caused enormous economic damage. In Belarus alone, the disaster caused US\$ 235 billion in damages. The Government of Belarus has accomplished much in the years since the disaster to minimize its effects. Now the time has come to assess the effectiveness of international assistance in that area and to chart the priorities for our joint work for the coming decade. Those are the issues that will be on the agenda of the international conference on the Chernobyl disaster to be held in April 2006 in Minsk. We call on Member States and all those who care about the fate of the millions of Chernobyl victims to support the Assembly's adoption of the draft resolution on Chernobyl. Finally, we propose the convening of a special meeting of the General Assembly on 26 April 2006 to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Chernobyl tragedy.

Belarus is a country that is used to relying on itself. We are not seeking any unfair international advantages nor do we follow anyone else's political lead. We have confidence in the strength, talent and diligence of our people. That is what allows us to speak and act in a principled and honest fashion in the international arena, without reference to the wishes of the powerful.

It is precisely for that reason that we stand for an open and honest dialogue at the United Nations. This is our common home. Here, the same simple, unconditional and clear principle should apply for all countries: equal among equals. The future of the United Nations rests on that. Belarus is ready to work with everyone to make that future happen.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Adam Daniel Rotfeld, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.

Mr. Rotfeld (Poland): Let me begin by congratulating President Jan Eliasson on his election. Allow me to assure him of Poland's readiness to support him in his efforts during this session. I would also like to join the European Union presidency — to whose statement we fully adhere — in expressing my words of gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping for his leadership during the preparations for the sixtieth anniversary summit.

This year in Poland we are commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the Solidarity movement. In the history of Europe since the Second World War, there have been few events that can be celebrated with a similar sense of pride and satisfaction. The history of Solidarity — and in particular its rebirth in 1989 — opened the way to profound historic changes in Europe and the entire world, including the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Communist bloc. I hope and believe that Solidarity's message still remains an inspiration not only for Poland, but also for the entire world — wherever there are people who uphold or aspire to freedom and solidarity. In that spirit, I would like to repeat our call to celebrate 31 August as a world day of freedom and solidarity. In our opinion, global solidarity should be the central value in and the key tool for achieving a new sense of community and realizing our common interests.

Poland's dedication to the concept of solidarity also draws strength from the fact that Poland itself benefited from foreign aid and support. Today, we are undergoing an important transition in our status: from aid recipient to donor. We hope that Poland's active cooperation for development will serve as a catalyst for further change and help lay the foundation for democracy, sustainable development, human rights and the rule of law.

For us, however, the concept of responsible solidarity is not solely limited to humanitarian endeavours; it means more than assisting the poor and underdeveloped. Solidarity is an operational principle, which generates cooperative attitudes among countries in need, including those plagued by terrorism, natural and manmade disasters, weak State structures and other calamities. Solidarity means rescue rather than relief, remedy rather than alleviation. It should be driven by

need — not by right — and cut across dividing lines. It is solidarity that can help to bridge religious and ideological divides and overcome the difficult legacy of the past. Indeed, if we want to build a world without divisions we must first suppress all disputes that feed on past grievances. We have to find a way to reconcile divergent points of view without sacrificing our principles.

The recently concluded High-level Plenary Meeting was a product of enormous efforts to forge a new global consensus on development, security, human rights and United Nations institutional reform. The agenda of the summit was long and ambitious. The preparatory process, as well as the summit itself, offered many insights, ideas and useful recommendations that merit further serious consideration. However, despite the great determination and expectations, we failed to achieve unity in confronting all of the world's most menacing problems.

The United Nations is a ponderous institution and does not embrace change easily. Thus, we should not expect that each and every summit will provide us with revolutionary changes. Real breakthroughs are usually the result of a lengthy process. Consequently, our outcome document should be regarded not as the end of reform, but as a guide for the further practical steps that need to be taken. In that context, I call on Members to devise a plan to implement our summit decisions and to submit it to the General Assembly for adoption. This time, we must break the vicious circle of inaction and ensure a proper follow-up to the summit. Finding workable forms and mechanisms for cooperation has never proved easy and will remain a serious challenge for the months ahead.

The United Nations operates in a constantly changing international environment. We have already identified major new threats, risks and challenges: the fanaticism of international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, organized crime, States in crisis and failed States. Although we claim to know their nature, we will never be quite able to predict how, where and when those threats will manifest themselves. At the same time, such threats cannot overshadow the importance of addressing their root causes, such as development gaps, poverty, social exclusion, natural disasters, discrimination and intolerance, among others.

We are passing through a transitional stage with all its strains and stresses. International institutions and mechanisms — designed to serve the old international system — must face the challenge of reform and accommodation. The United Nations is not an exception. As a consequence, we have had to find ways and means to respond to the swiftly changing nature of security threats and risks. Thus, the challenge remains the same as for all of us: how do we manage that change?

In this era of globalization and rapid change, no country alone can fully ensure its own security. State security is more than ever before dependent on external determinants. What we need is an innovative and imaginative approach to security, both in the realm of strategy and in its constituent processes. Moreover, we have to develop a new security paradigm according to which the security of individuals is as important as the security of States.

Likewise, we need a new concept of sovereignty that attaches greater importance to protecting the rights of people than to the prerogatives of State power. We must place the human being at the centre of the activities of international institutions.

It is true that the first duty of a Government should be to protect those living within its jurisdiction from genocide, mass killing and human rights violations. However, in certain instances, the responsibility of the international community to take action must be ensured.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a longstanding problem that has afflicted the international community for many years. However, in the light of the particularly threatening nexus of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, it has taken on a new dimension. No State is immune to it or is protected from its consequences. At the same time, existing systems of national control and international non-proliferation agreements are not completely effective and are undermined by loopholes and lacunae which enable States and individuals to bypass the regime. It is all the more disappointing, therefore, that the United Nations summit failed to reach an outcome on non-proliferation and disarmament.

To address that challenge adequately, we have to strengthen the three pillars of the nuclear-arms-control regime: non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We should, however,

ensure that it works in a harmonious and self-sustaining way.

Another issue is that of enforcement. Legal norms that are not effectively enforced obviously do not serve their purpose. We have to seek ways and means to ensure effective verification and to enforce respect for existing non-proliferation and disarmament obligations. We cannot count solely on persuasion and containment.

More fundamentally, we need a comprehensive review of the existing negotiating machinery. With that in mind, two methods of action are possible. One would be to establish a group of experts; the other — perhaps a better solution — would be to request that a respected international independent research centre — such as, for example, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute — prepare a report containing recommendations on how to make existing United Nations institutions and mechanisms more effective, operational and efficient.

Our concerted efforts to strengthen the United Nations will be doomed to failure if we continue to believe that only security issues matter. They certainly do matter, but security is a much broader concept. It does not involve only the absence of hard or soft threats. It is, above all, about the absence of threats to fundamental human values. Likewise, the eradication of poverty is essential not only to peace and development, but, first and foremost, to the preservation of human rights and standards. Ensuring social justice and reducing inequalities do not involve only the allocation of scarce resources to guarantee security; they also presuppose both human freedom and human dignity.

In that context, Poland welcomes the proposed changes to the United Nations human rights machinery, especially the decision to establish a Human Rights Council. We believe that such an organ would enable us to promote respect for human rights in a more efficient and responsible way.

We should also promote democracy through the United Nations in order to protect human rights and expand democratic freedoms. No one can claim that democracies are free of contradictions and injustices. But it is democracies that best serve to defend the values we want to protect and promote.

In that spirit, on behalf of the citizens of Poland, I would like to reiterate our sincere and strong support

for the Democracy Fund, established to assist countries in their transition to democracy. I truly believe that this new mechanism will help to address differences among and within societies in a spirit of true respect and understanding.

Poland's commitment to the community of shared values does not mean that we disregard the institutional and technical aspects of reform. Institutional adaptation should be characterized by openness, transparency and effectiveness. These are precisely the principles that have guided us in the process of analysing Security Council reform and establishing the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council.

Reform of the Security Council is proving to be an enormously complex and divisive issue. Although necessary, it should not be conducted at the cost of compromising the Council's capacity to meet its Charter responsibilities. The Republic of Poland believes that the effectiveness and efficiency of the Security Council rests on the assumption that membership not only grants additional privileges but also increases responsibilities.

Furthermore, Poland fully recognizes the importance of the ongoing process carried out by the Secretary-General, which is aimed at enhancing effective management of the Organization. We strongly encourage continuing such efforts to strengthen United Nations accountability and its oversight mechanisms as well as to promote the efficient use of its human resources. System-wide coherence, particularly regarding operational capabilities and humanitarian assistance, should be high on the reform agenda. We hope that such an approach will enhance the Organization's capacity to carry out its new tasks and meet its new challenges, thus enhancing the authority of the United Nations and its role in the international system.

Poland's commitments in the framework of the United Nations are not made based on tactical considerations. We are not calculating what we can gain from this or that choice. We do not expect to make political profits or economic gains. But we share a sense of solidarity and responsibility with respect not only to our own country but also to the entire international community.

A system based on values and principles may not be perfect, but it is likely to be more peaceful and, in

the long run, more conducive and responsive to the needs of peoples. In that spirit, I hope that this anniversary session will provide a strong impetus to rebuild the community of shared values and enable us to replace the global psychology of competition with a spirit of cooperation.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nguyen Dy Nien, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.

Mr. Nguyen Dy Nien (Viet Nam): At the outset, I would like, on behalf of the Vietnamese delegation, sincerely to congratulate Mr. Jan Eliasson on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I am convinced that under his able stewardship this session will be crowned with success. Let me express our deep appreciation for the contributions made by his predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, to the work of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his great efforts over the past year to reform and strengthen our Organization.

Taking place in the context of the many activities commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations — especially the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly that just concluded — the present session constitutes an event of crucial significance that offers us a great deal of hope and confidence. We believe that Member States will be able to work out effective ways in which to implement the commitments contained in the outcome document (resolution 60/1) just adopted by our leaders, especially those concerning the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We are confident that, amid both challenges and opportunities and with the necessary wisdom and determination, we will find the right path towards a brighter future for humanity in the twenty-first century.

In today's celebratory atmosphere, we cannot and should not forget stark realities as we continue to see the spread of war and conflict, the resurgence of terrorism, natural disasters, poverty, the outbreak of epidemics and transnational crime, which are threatening the peace, security, independence and prosperity of nations. The people of the world were shocked by the recent terrorist attacks in London, in Sharm el-Sheikh and elsewhere. Viet Nam therefore joins with others in the fight against terrorism of all

kinds. It is our view that, in order to root out terrorism, the international community must seriously and adequately address the phenomena of poverty, injustice and inequality.

Viet Nam welcomes the recent positive developments in the Middle East peace process. It is our consistent policy to support the just cause of the Palestinian people in their struggle for their inalienable rights. In that connection, we welcome Israel's withdrawal from resettlement areas in the Gaza Strip.

Proceeding from its principled position that international disputes should be settled by peaceful means, Viet Nam supports peaceful solutions to the nuclear issue in Iran and on the Korean peninsula.

Considering embargoes and blockades to be unacceptable in the modern world, we call for the early lifting of the unilateral embargo against Cuba. It is Viet Nam's view that the United Nations should be more active in that connection.

The tsunami that affected Asian countries last year and Hurricane Katrina, which hit coastal cities of the United States, both resulting in the loss of a great number of lives and damage worth hundreds of billions of dollars, are reminders of the need for effective early warning systems, preparedness and international solidarity in confronting the forces of nature.

As we are preparing to translate the commitments contained in the outcome document into action to reform the United Nations, I would like to associate myself with the views expressed by the Secretary-General in his report "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005) and reaffirmed in the outcome document concerning the interactive links among peace, security, development and human rights. Viet Nam's experience shows that an environment of peace and political and social stability is indispensable for development and that economic growth, the improvement of people's lives, will help to strengthen peace and stability. In that regard, we believe the United Nations should play a greater role in making those links more interactive.

Viet Nam shares the common view that reform of the United Nations should aim, first and foremost, at enhancing the Organization's efficiency and democracy on the basis of strengthening the fundamental principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. It is essential to reinforce the central role and power of the General Assembly, a body that stipulates the equal

participation of all United Nations Members. Reform of the Security Council should be accorded adequate attention, so that the Council can be turned into a body that is able to perform its functions in maintaining international peace and security effectively. The Council's working methods should be improved to ensure democracy and transparency. The Council needs to be enlarged in both categories of its membership in order to ensure that it truly represents all United Nations Members, as stipulated in the Charter. We believe that developing States should be more adequately represented in that important organ. We would like to reiterate the support we have expressed since 1999 for India, Japan and Germany as permanent members of an expanded Council.

Furthermore, Viet Nam believes that reform of the United Nations must be carried out comprehensively and in a way that ensures a balance between the two equally important and mutually complementary goals of maintaining peace and security and promoting development. An enabling environment for development must be built on the basis of equitable international economic relations, mutual benefit, shared responsibility and the fulfilment of agreed commitments.

In that spirit, Viet Nam supports the proposals on development set out in the report of the Secretary-General and the commitments contained in the outcome document, especially the recommitment of the international community to achieving the MDGs on schedule. Viet Nam welcomes the commitment on the part of some developed countries to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross national income to official development assistance without any conditions. If developing nations are to achieve the MDGs, it is essential that they be enabled to participate more actively in the global economy. Viet Nam therefore calls on the United Nations to adopt and implement measures to facilitate the entry of developing countries into the World Trade Organization. Moreover, non-tariff and other protective measures aimed at blocking exports from developing countries, under such pretexts as sanitary and phytosanitary standards, should be dismantled.

Guaranteeing and promoting human rights always remain high priorities in the work of the United Nations. Viet Nam supports a greater role for the Organization in that regard. We will continue to spare no effort in contributing to the common cause of

human rights protection. Mindful of the need to reform the United Nations machinery for protecting human rights, we believe that reform must be conducted in a manner that is free from acts of politicization. More in-depth discussions are needed with regard to the issue of establishing a Human Rights Council and the concept of the responsibility to protect, so as to ensure broad support for the measures to be implemented.

The Vietnamese people have just celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of their democratic State. Having gone through a process of comprehensive renewal, Viet Nam today is a country with high and sustained economic growth and social equity, and we have made significant progress in implementing the MDGs. Today, Viet Nam is a safe and stable country that has further integrated into the global economy and has pursued a foreign policy of independence, sovereignty and diversification, strengthening multilateral ties in its external relations. It is a country that is willing to be a friend and a reliable partner of all countries of the world community.

We have actively participated in various regional, interregional and global cooperation arrangements. Viet Nam has been making great efforts to conclude negotiations for its early accession to the World Trade Organization. I would like to take this opportunity to extend our thanks to those countries that have supported Viet Nam in that connection. We are actively engaged in the cooperation activities of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), as well as with ASEAN cooperation with East Asia. To make a greater contribution to the work of the United Nations, Viet Nam has decided to present its candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the 2008-2009 term. We are now actively preparing to participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations when conditions are ripe.

To conclude, let me assure the Assembly that Viet Nam will continue to work closely with other countries in the international community to strive for our common goals, among them a stronger United Nations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Berhane Abrehe, Minister of Finance of Eritrea.

Mr. Abrehe (Eritrea): Allow me to congratulate the President on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I wish to

assure him and his colleagues in the Bureau of my delegation's support as he guides our deliberations. Allow me also to thank his predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping of Gabon, for his effective leadership at the fifty-ninth session of the Assembly.

In addition, let me take this opportunity to extend my country's deep sympathy and condolences to all Governments and peoples that have suffered tragic losses of life and destruction of property as a result of acts of terrorism and natural and man-made disasters.

At this general debate, I wish to address the Assembly on a matter of grave and immediate importance to my country that has serious consequences for the supremacy of international law and the maintenance of regional peace and security.

Almost four years after the decision of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission, the dark clouds of war once again hang over my country. The legal provisions of the Algiers Agreement, the legal underpinnings of the independent arbitration process and the manner in which that process was established, and the unequivocal decision of the Boundary Commission are all too well known to be repeated here. But allow me to cite the cardinal elements of the Algiers Agreement to refresh members' memories.

Article 4.15 of the Algiers Agreement explicitly states,

"The parties agree that the delimitation and demarcation determinations of the Commission shall be final and binding. Each party shall respect the border so determined, as well as the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the other party."

I must stress here that violation of the Agreement represents nothing less than blatant disrespect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of a United Nations Member State.

In the sixteenth report on the work of the Boundary Commission of February 2005, when the Commission was forced to close down its field offices in Eritrea and Ethiopia, it warned that,

"... the line of the boundary was legally and finally determined by its Delimitation Decision of 13 April 2002. Though undemarcated, this line is binding upon both Parties, subject to the minor qualifications expressed in the Delimitation

Decision, unless they agree otherwise. Conduct inconsistent with this boundary is unlawful." (S/2005/142, Annex I, para. 33)

The Boundary Commission's decision should not be tampered with. In that regard, article 4.2 of the Algiers Agreement unambiguously stipulates that,

"The parties agree that a neutral Boundary Commission composed of five members shall be established with a mandate to delimit and demarcate the colonial treaty border based on the pertinent colonial treaties (1900, 1902 and 1908) and applicable international law. The Commission shall not have the power to make decisions *ex aequo et bono*."

The situation with which we are now confronted is therefore not an intractable border dispute requiring the flexibility of the parties. It is squarely a grave matter of an illegal and forcible occupation of the sovereign territory of Eritrea, a United Nations Member State, in clear violation of Article 2.4 of the United Nations Charter.

Ethiopia is not only occupying the village of Badme and other sovereign Eritrean territory; it also continues to build illegal settlements in those areas with a view to, in the words of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, creating facts on the ground.

Ethiopia's unrestrained assault on the rule of law and the sanctity of treaty agreements will have severe consequences not only for the people of the two neighbouring countries and the Horn of Africa but, through the bad precedent it sets, also for other countries and regions, as well as for the credibility and the legitimacy of the United Nations. Yet Ethiopia's acts of occupation continue to be tolerated by the United Nations and the other guarantors of the Algiers Agreement.

Paragraph 14 of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities (S/2000/601, annex), which is an integral component of the Algiers Agreement, specifies that

"OAU and the United Nations commit themselves to guarantee the respect for this commitment of the two Parties until the determination of the common border ... This guarantee shall be comprised of:

"(a) Measures to be taken by the international community should one or both

of the Parties violate this commitment, including appropriate measures to be taken under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter by the United Nations Security Council;"

The United Nations and the African Union, as guarantors, are parties to the treaty. They have obligations to ensure implementation of the Algiers Agreement without preconditions. In the event that either Eritrea or Ethiopia fails to implement the Agreement, the United Nations is empowered by the Agreement to invoke Chapter VII of the Charter with respect to the reneging party.

The treaty agreement must be enforced and the numerous international instruments must be applied in order to end occupation and restore legality. The Security Council is mandated to maintain peace and security, *inter alia*, by eliminating all forms of occupation. Unfortunately, the United Nations and some members of the international community have so far been advancing arguments that are irrelevant to the issue and are in contravention of international law in order to decline from taking the appropriate action.

Existing and aspirant members of the Security Council — both permanent and non-permanent — must fully appreciate the fact that the cardinal principle of the Charter is that membership of the Security Council must be considered as service to humanity and the cause of peace and not as a means to promote and protect their own interests or the interests of their allies. They must uphold the sacred trust to protect the credibility and viability of the United Nations.

Respect for international agreements has been, and must continue to be, the foundation of the principle of peaceful coexistence among nations. Any compromise on that principle will result in the erosion of trust in the international system and will severely damage the functioning of the United Nations.

Eritrea and Ethiopia may soon be dragged once again into a new phase of armed conflict. Yet, there is still an opportunity for a peaceful resolution if the United Nations honours its treaty obligations and addresses the one core issue, Ethiopia's illegal occupation of sovereign Eritrean territory. If the United Nations fails to reverse the occupation, it will be as responsible as Ethiopia for any renewed armed conflict and its consequences.

At this juncture, I wish to remind the Assembly that the United Nations has betrayed the Eritrean people twice during the past 60 years. This would be the third betrayal if it does not respect its treaty and Charter obligations by settling this occupation through peaceful means.

In conclusion, I wish to inform the Assembly categorically that Eritrea is determined, and has the right, to defend and preserve its territorial integrity by any means possible.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdullah Abdullāh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Mr. Abdullāh (Afghanistan): I have the honour to inform the members of the General Assembly of the successful conclusion of the parliamentary and provincial elections that took place in my country two days ago. As stated by President Karzai, "the holding of these elections was a major success for the people of Afghanistan and a major defeat for those attempting to derail the political process". In defiance of the threats posed by the enemies of peace and stability in Afghanistan, Al-Qaida and the Taliban, millions of men and women enthusiastically travelled to polling stations to cast their votes. With the conclusion of these elections, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has now completed the final phase of the Bonn Agreement, sponsored by the United Nations in December 2001.

The determination and political will expressed by the people of Afghanistan have made possible the gradual, yet arduous, transition towards stability and democracy in Afghanistan. During the course of the transition, Afghanistan successfully convened two *loya jirgas*, adopted a new Constitution enshrining the principles of democracy, held its first-ever presidential elections and, most recently, concluded its parliamentary and provincial elections.

In this context, allow me to express on behalf of the people and the Government of Afghanistan our most sincere gratitude and appreciation to the United Nations, the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force, coalition forces, Provincial Reconstruction Teams, international observers and other international partners for the assistance rendered towards achieving this objective.

Allow me to highlight briefly some of the other achievements that have taken place during the past four years. The Government of Afghanistan continues to make significant progress with regard to the reform of the security sector and the formation of the national army and police in order to further extend and consolidate peace and authority throughout the country. The disarmament and demobilization of 60,000 former combatants has been completed. In that regard, the Government of Afghanistan reaffirms its commitment to complete the reintegration of ex-combatants as the final phase of a successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

Significant progress has been made in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Our new Constitution guarantees equal rights for men and women, freedom of expression, freedom of press and political pluralism. The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission has been institutionalized as an independent body in accordance with our Constitution. The Commission continues to fulfil its mandate.

We have also witnessed the enrolment of more than 5 million children, both boys and girls, in school. Repatriation of millions of refugees from neighbouring countries has also taken place during the past four years. The significant increase in the role of women in the social, political and economic life of the country is also worth mentioning.

The cultivation of opium poppy and the production of narcotic drugs in Afghanistan remains a prime concern of my Government. The establishment of a counter-narcotics ministry, the creation of a special tribunal to prosecute those associated with the cultivation, production and trafficking of illegal drugs and the formation of the Committee on Counter-Narcotics, chaired by President Karzai, are only some of the initiatives taken by the Afghan Government aimed at combating and eliminating the scourge of narcotic drugs.

I am pleased to refer to the recent report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which rightly reflected a 21 per cent decrease in the cultivation of opium poppy in Afghanistan during the current year. However, in order to build on this achievement, we must offer alternative livelihoods to rural communities. A successful strategy in combating illicit drugs requires additional measures aside from

asking farmers to plant substitute crops. We have to provide them with agricultural assistance, invest in irrigation, build roads and provide electric power and assistance in generating non-farm employment in rural areas.

Many of the achievements realized in Afghanistan since the signing of the Bonn Agreement would not have been possible without the vigorous support of the international community. I take this opportunity to extend our deep gratitude to all international partners and lead nations which offered generous support throughout the process. In this context, we emphasize the importance of the sustained engagement and support of the international community over the coming years for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan, as well as for the consolidation of peace and security.

Despite the achievements to which I referred earlier, the people of Afghanistan continue to face many challenges in their daily lives. Extreme poverty, a high rate of infant and maternal mortality and a lack of resources necessary to ensure basic social services continue to exist.

The outcome document adopted on 16 September 2005 (resolution 60/1) has laid the foundation for a more effective and efficient United Nations better able to address issues relating to development, peace and security, human rights, reform of the United Nations and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The Government of Afghanistan welcomes the proposal adopted in the outcome document with regard to the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission. As a country emerging from years of conflict, Afghanistan fully understands the need for a coordinated, coherent and integrated approach to post-conflict peacebuilding. My Government also supports the decision that the Commission should begin its work by no later than 31 December 2005.

As a result of ongoing efforts by Afghanistan and the international community to combat international terrorism, my country no longer serves as a base for Al-Qaida and the Taliban. However, the people of Afghanistan continue to suffer from the scourge of international terrorism. Terrorism remains one of the main challenges to peace, stability and sustainable development in Afghanistan. The continued infiltration of Al-Qaida and Taliban extremists in the south and

parts of the east of the country remains a factor contributing to insecurity in my country.

We therefore reiterate the importance of a sincere commitment by all the countries of the region to combating that scourge. The Government of Afghanistan once again vehemently condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. In that context, we support every effort aimed at the successful conclusion of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism by the end of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

The Secretary-General clearly highlighted the interrelationship between development and security in his report "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005), which, in paragraph 2 of the annex, states, "There will be no development without security and no security without development". The case of Afghanistan could not be more relevant in that respect.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Afghanistan is not just a desirable humanitarian objective, but a necessity for the security of the country, the region and the world. Attaining the Goals will require a substantial amount of international aid, provided in a coordinated and sustained manner.

My Government is in the process of preparing Afghanistan's national development strategy, which will be presented at the donor conference on Afghanistan scheduled to take place early next year. The national development strategy encompasses a clear approach to achieving our national development goals and addresses vital areas such as capacity-building, fiscal sustainability, building infrastructure and prioritizing projects. The Afghanistan national development strategy will also present Afghanistan's overarching strategy for promoting growth and reducing poverty, and will serve as the country's overall strategy for attracting international assistance.

The national development strategy will be prepared in a consultative process with all stakeholders, including donors, civil society, the private sector and provincial councils. Through a post-Bonn compact, Afghanistan will subscribe to a new set of timetables and benchmarks for providing security, building democratic institutions, protecting human rights and reducing extreme poverty in accordance with our MDG targets, reforming the administration, eliminating corruption, ending the production of and

traffic in narcotic drugs and developing cooperation with our neighbours.

As a landlocked country, Afghanistan will not be able to achieve its intended economic goals without the support and mutual cooperation of its neighbours. The Government of Afghanistan emphasizes the importance of regional economic cooperation for the benefit of all countries in the region. Trade plays a major role in promoting economic growth, employment and development for all. The volume of trade between Afghanistan and its neighbours has been growing steadily. Just last year, the estimated value of trade between Afghanistan and its neighbours amounted to \$1.5 billion.

I would like in conclusion to express Afghanistan's full commitment to the implementation of the outcome document. We are of the conviction that the adoption of that historic document will further enhance the central role of the United Nations in addressing the threats and challenges facing humanity at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Victor Manuel Barbosa Borges, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Communities of the Republic of Cape Verde.

Mr. Barbosa Borges (Cape Verde) (*spoke in Portuguese; English interpretation from French text provided by the delegation*): I would like to express congratulations and support to the President of the General Assembly for having chosen as the theme of our debate, "For a stronger and more effective United Nations: follow-up to and implementation of decisions made in the High-level Plenary Meeting of September 2005".

Ten years before the target date, we are still faced with doubts and questions about the actual achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly in Africa. There are two interconnected elements at the heart of this matter: States' development policies; and the effective fulfilment of the commitments entered into by the international community. I have no intention of evaluating national policies, but it is clear that the achievement of the MDGs will require far-reaching adjustments in our national policies and increased efforts to reorganize and manage our budgets. Furthermore, the emergence of a new African leadership, which is bringing us together again in our

commitment to promoting development, democracy, peace and political stability, is an opportunity for the international community to provide more consistent support for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Unfortunately, despite a great deal of discussion about the MDGs, we are still falling short with regard to the commitments undertaken, to the clear distress of the populations afflicted by pandemics such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, which is spreading at an alarming rate.

As the head of State of Cape Verde said when addressing the Assembly during the High-level Plenary Meeting last week (see A/60/PV.5), achieving the Millennium Goals and building a freer world based on higher levels of well-being, tolerance, peace and security are within reach for humankind.

In order to achieve our goal, we need political will, not just statements about political will or pious expressions of hope for development. It is the responsibility of the General Assembly at this session to ensure that the summit outcome (resolution 60/1) is effectively implemented. However, there can be no doubt that the implementation of the outcome will be a test of the policies that have been set out, as well as of the negotiating skills of Member States, as we strive to achieve a better balance on international relations, further the democratization of international governance and strengthen peace and security at the regional and national levels. We must redouble our efforts this year.

In the context of the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General, Cape Verde has been chosen to host the joint office initiative, with the participation of United Nations programmes and agencies in the field. May I once again reiterate my Government's support for this initiative, while at the same time emphasizing the absolute need for there to be adequate preparation for this experiment, as well as internal adjustments consistent with the option of joint representation. We are convinced that the joint office initiative will make it possible to concentrate resources more effectively on priority challenges and the substantive aspects of development.

On 5 July 2005, the Republic of Cape Verde celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of its independence; these 30 years have been marked by considerable sacrifice and effort in a country without natural resources. Throughout this period, fortunately, all the

development indicators have shown upward movement. Under a resolution adopted by the General Assembly in December 2004, Cape Verde has made sufficient progress to be no longer included in the list of least developed countries. This "graduation" is an explicit recognition of the work done by the people of Cape Verde; and, undoubtedly, it is also the result of the international aid provided by various partners. Therefore, I should like to take this opportunity to express to all of Cape Verde's development partners, both present and absent in this Hall, our profound gratitude for the solidarity thus extended to us.

At the risk of repeating myself, I should like to recall the following points. The "graduation" of Cape Verde is a result of the fact that the country satisfied two of the three established criteria. I am referring to the per capita income per inhabitant and the human development index. The failure to identify the third criterion, that of economic vulnerability, which is by far the most important one, illustrates the kind of fragile situations that can be experienced by a small island country that is permanently afflicted by drought and external shocks, of which the increase in oil prices is a very illustrative example.

For success to be meaningful over the medium and long term, "graduation" should be accompanied by the appropriate measures needed to ensure continuity of the development process. It is of fundamental importance to define the goals, their duration and the practical modalities for this transition, and it should be done as quickly as possible. What has been achieved by Cape Verde, thanks to the judicious management of foreign aid, cannot obscure major structural vulnerabilities. Parenthetically, I would like to reiterate once again an appeal to the international community to give particular attention to the specific problems of development in small island States.

We are convinced that, when Cape Verde leaves the group of least developed countries in January 2008, we will have agreed upon a common frame of reference, together with our development partners, one that is based on General Assembly resolution 59/209 and is in step with the spirit of smooth transition, where emphasis will be placed on questions of trade, financing for development, including modalities and more effective and innovative instruments that fit the needs for accelerated economic growth of a "graduated" but vulnerable country.

We continue to be convinced that the development target we share with our partners must not lead to our being penalized for good governance and a positive development dynamic. For our part, we will continue to rely on the solidarity of our partners, including the United Nations.

Regarding financing for development and the urgent need to adjust the practices and instruments of aid to the requirements of achieving the MDGs, I should like to comment on the decision taken by the Group of 8 to eliminate external debt. The Government of Cape Verde is delighted at the Gleneagles decision to forgive the external debt of 18 countries, mostly African ones. This is a shot of oxygen for the development process of the recipient countries.

That having been said, however, the Government of Cape Verde believes that we will need to analyse the problem further in order to ensure that solutions are integrated effectively into the international agenda. On the one hand, the situation of poor countries, which are deeply indebted, requires an increase in solidarity. On the other hand, we also believe that some gesture should be made towards the medium-income countries, particularly those that are bereft of natural resources and only slightly indebted and who, at the same time, honour their debt servicing in a structural framework that is marked by budgetary constraints. Otherwise, the message underlying the decision to pardon the debt will be extremely ambiguous and could lend itself to various interpretations.

I would like to end with what one normally starts with, and that is by congratulating the President on his election to lead the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. My congratulations are equally extended to Sweden, his country, which has always given invaluable assistance promoting the self-determination of peoples, world peace and development. I would also like to express my gratitude to his predecessor, Minister of State Jean Ping, for the competent and wise discharge of his functions during a period of intense and difficult negotiations.

May I finally address our gratitude, encouragement and confidence to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. His vision of the future of the world and of the United Nations deserves to be supported by us all, so that our Organization, which belongs to all of us, can respond to the growing and complex challenges of the current world.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Siosua T'Utoikamanu, Minister for Finance of the Kingdom of Tonga.

Mr. T'Utoikamanu (Tonga): May I first take this opportunity to congratulate the President on his election to lead the work of the General Assembly. Let me also reassure him of Tonga's support and full confidence that the sixtieth session of the General Assembly will be fruitful and successful under his very able leadership.

I would also like to give due recognition to the sterling work of his predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Gabon, during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

I also join others in commending Secretary-General Kofi Anan for his leadership of our Organization.

As we celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of our Organization, we can pause and reflect on where we are, and on the basis of our experience in the past and the opportunities available for us in the future. We can chart a roadmap that will ensure that we, the Member States, deliver on our commitments to the purposes and principles of the Charter and international law, which are indispensable foundations of a more peaceful, prosperous and just world. Tonga shares the concerns voiced by several other delegations that business cannot proceed as usual, as this will continue to affect the role and relevancy of our Organization and the important place of multilateralism in accomplishing its aims.

The Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change delivered the landmark report expected of it. The Panel's far-reaching findings and recommendations laid a firm foundation for what our Foreign Minister described last year as "constructive engagement". Tonga remains optimistic that the level and intensity of engagement among Member States can still produce a lasting legacy of improvement and the necessary changes for our Organization and its important work.

Last Friday, at the conclusion of the historic High-level Plenary Meeting, heads of State and Government adopted the outcome document, which provides multilateral solutions to the problems in development, peace and collective security, human

rights, the rule of law and the strengthening of the United Nations. The baton has now been passed on to us to begin the implementation phase of the summit's outcome, and we need to rise to the challenge to make good on our promises.

The development agenda remains the first priority for small island developing countries, including Tonga. Over three decades, we have accumulated experience in national and integrated regional development planning and have, therefore, fully embraced our primary responsibility for our own development. The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals has been incorporated into our wider development efforts.

The financing of these development programmes, however, continues to depend on bilateral and multilateral official development assistance (ODA), as well as on concessionary loans from regional and global financial institutions.

In this regard, we welcome the proposed increased resources that will become available as a result of the establishment of timetables by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) for ODA by 2015. We congratulate those countries that have already fulfilled their commitment in meeting the required target. The recent efforts and initiatives to enhance the quality of aid and to increase its impact, including the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, are also welcome steps.

ODA, while necessary, will be insufficient on its own and would have to be complemented by active promotion of foreign direct investment, improving trade access and effective development partnerships.

The outcome document emphasizes that one of the critical challenges to economic growth is to ensure that the necessary internal conditions are put in place for mobilizing domestic savings. Tonga embarked on a public sector and economic reform programme in 2002. To date, several important pieces of legislation have been enacted through the Legislative Assembly, including the Public Finance Act of 2002, to modernize the way the Government manages its finances and to provide for more transparency; the Public Service Act of 2002, to modernize employment and remuneration methods; and the Public Enterprise Act of 2002 to provide for increased accountability by public enterprises. A programme of reform of Tonga's system

of taxation is also under way to bring it into conformity with international norms and bilateral and multilateral obligations.

Tonga welcomes the recognition in the outcome document of the special needs and vulnerabilities of small island developing States and the commitment to address those needs and vulnerabilities through full and effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy adopted by the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

Energy continues to play a crucial role in Tonga's sustainable development strategies, and maintaining a fine balance between energy, the environment and the economy is a national priority. Tonga's increasing reliance on imported petroleum products to satisfy its energy needs means that it is particularly vulnerable to external events that affect the price and availability of petroleum products. In this regard, Tonga reiterates its concern over the continuing escalation of the price of oil and its negative impact on its economy. Concerted efforts will have to focus on research and development for alternative sources of energy.

Tonga recognizes the need to promote gender equality with the implementation of its National Policy on Gender and Development, which was approved in 2001.

Remittances are a welcome source of foreign exchange, and Tonga is recorded as one of the countries most dependent on them as they amount to 39 per cent of gross domestic product. We therefore acknowledge the important nexus between international migration and development and the need to deal with the challenges and opportunities that migration presents to countries of origin, destination and transit. We also look forward to the General Assembly's high-level dialogue on international migration and development, to be held in 2006.

We join with others who have voiced their regret at the failure of the 2005 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference and reiterate the importance of implementing the three pillars of the Treaty.

Tonga supports the call to establish the mandate, modalities, functions, size, composition membership,

working methods and procedures of the new Human Rights Council as soon as possible during the current session of the General Assembly.

We fully recognize that post-conflict peacebuilding is vital to achieving sustainable peace and support the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission by the end of 2005.

We strongly condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, wherever and for whatever purpose, as it constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. We also look forward to the successful conclusion of the comprehensive convention on international terrorism during the present session of the Assembly. Tonga continues to support the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee and has progressed well in drafting domestic legislation to put into effect all of the 12 counter-terrorism conventions to which we have acceded.

We applaud the efforts and proposals for a comprehensive package of reforms to revitalize the General Assembly and to strengthen the Economic and Social Council, to enable them to fulfil their mandates as envisaged in the Charter. We also support the ongoing work of the Secretary-General to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Secretariat.

Perhaps one of the more intense engagements among our membership involves the reform of the Security Council. Tonga maintains its support for Japan's proper and permanent place on any enhanced Council. The emergence, in particular, of prospective permanent members and novel ideas on criteria has made this issue more deserving of further patience, poise and pragmatism. However, momentum and advances on readily agreeable aspects of our reform agenda should proceed to fruition.

The ever-changing landscape of the Middle East continues to present hopeful signs suggesting that an enduring peace is possible. Genuine gestures, like that involving Gaza, by Israel and the Palestinian Authority, offer a platform upon which mutual borders might be secured and upon which statehood might flourish.

Regional organizations play an important role in supporting and complementing the interests of member countries in various fields, and Tonga acknowledges the role of the Pacific Island Forum in that regard. At a regional level, Tonga is fully committed to its

obligations in ensuring peace in the region and continues to support the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands with the third deployment by the Tonga Defence Services currently in operation in the Solomon Islands. The Pacific Plan, which was articulated by our Pacific Forum leaders for the realization of their vision through deeper and stronger regional cooperation and integration in the areas of economic growth, social development, security and environmental protection, will be tabled for consideration by the leaders in October of this year. Tonga, therefore, welcomes the call for support of a stronger relationship between the United Nations and regional organizations.

The Kingdom continues to observe a "one-China" policy that recognizes Taiwan as an integral and inalienable part of China. An essential component of that policy properly acknowledges that common and mutual issues are ideally left to an across-the-Straits framework dialogue, as opposed to any multilateral formula, however well conceived.

Tonga continues to develop and strengthen its "Look East" policy, in particular with China. Earlier this year, the Kingdom established a diplomatic presence in Beijing to give strong voice to its interests and impetus to its exploration and pursuit of mutually relevant and beneficial ventures, including tourism, trade, aviation and security.

The world is watching us. Let us not renege on our commitments but push forward on the reforms that are essential to ensuring that multilateralism remains the most efficient and effective way to address global problems and issues.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Raymond Ramazani Baya, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Ramazani Baya (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): It is a pleasure to join preceding speakers in congratulating Mr. Jan Eliasson on his election as President at the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. In particular, I welcome the fact that the international community has given him the honour of being elected President of the General Assembly, at its present session at which we are commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the Organization. Moreover, at the present session we shall, above all, work to implement the commitments

undertaken by the heads of State or Government to strengthen United Nations reform and adapt the Organization to the changes on the international stage so that it can remain the forum for coordination and debate, an irreplaceable instrument for conflict prevention and management and the body for upholding international law and the integrity of States.

I also congratulate the President at the fifty-ninth session, Mr. Jean Ping, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and la Francophonie of the Gabonese Republic. With his great human qualities and his skill as a statesman, he carried out his mission with tact and personal engagement.

Finally, allow me to convey to Secretary-General Kofi Annan the encouragement and the gratitude of Mr. Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for his commitment to finding a solution to the crisis in the Great Lakes region and for the importance that he attaches to the protection of the values of human dignity.

Mr. Eliasson is presiding over the General Assembly at a pivotal moment for our Organization. It would be hard not to make a connection between the history of my country, the President's mandate and the destiny of an eminent citizen of his country, Sweden, who gained fame in my country for his commitment to the cause of peace. I am referring to Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld, the second Secretary-General of the United Nations.

As the President has assumed his functions in September, it should be recalled that on 20 September 1960, my country became a Member of the United Nations. And on 18 September 1961, the late Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld gave his life for his commitment to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I pay tribute to the memory and the courage of that hero, as well as to the civilian and military members of the United Nations Operation in the Congo who lost their lives alongside our soldiers while defending the sovereignty and the integrity of our territory.

A comparison of the United Nations involvement in the Congo in 1960 and that of the present reveals a number of similarities, including the tireless dedication to the cause of peace demonstrated by the Blue Helmets. My country has twice benefited from peace operations, and we know the price paid by United Nations forces to save us from disaster. Our first-hand

experience of United Nations intervention strengthens our belief that now, more than ever, the world needs a strong, reformed United Nations.

As discussions on Security Council reform have reached a crucial stage, it is time for us to acknowledge that, in spite of its limitations, the United Nations — the forum of nations — has become the conscience of humanity. Its present and future role can be addressed only when one reflects on recent changes in the world and on the Organization's capacity to adapt to the new challenges posed by development, the debt crisis, the specific needs of the least developed countries, terrorism and the issues of human rights, peace and collective security.

In that context, it is desirable for the United Nations to modify its structure in order to be better able to face new and old challenges and promote the values of our civilization, founded on the principles of freedom and democracy.

The desired enlargement of the Security Council, as envisaged, is now a requirement of the greatest democratic importance. But while it is necessary, it is not in itself sufficient to ensure the harmonious and efficient functioning of the United Nations system. We must go further, beyond mere expansion, to realize the ambitions that Member States have for the United Nations. Security Council reform should not overshadow the need to review the other United Nations organs, in particular the Economic and Social Council, the Secretariat and the General Assembly, with a view to strengthening their mandates, and enabling the President of the General Assembly to play a primary role in seeking solutions to international problems.

Also in the context of reform, my country looks forward to the establishment of the new Peacebuilding Commission and to the creation of multi-year standing funds. That would enable countries emerging from conflict to receive real, substantial contributions in support of rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts and would help those countries lay the foundations for sustainable development.

The international community has invested heavily in the work of rebuilding State structures in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and has provided significant support through the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of

the Congo (MONUC). I convey the deep gratitude of the Congolese people.

In the context of the holding of transparent multiparty elections to put an end to the crisis of legitimacy and the endless loop of transitions, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is taking giant steps towards concluding the transition process. I would like to assure the Assembly of the determination of the Government of National Unity to carry out the transition in accordance with the constitutional timetable.

The adoption by referendum of a draft constitution by the end of the year will make the process irreversible. The elections must take place. And it is certain that they will take place, because of the great determination of the Congolese people and the great commitment of the Government of National Unity. The harmonious progress in the process, despite some logistic constraints related to the immense size of the national territory and the complexity of the voter registration process, leads us to predict with confidence that the various electoral deadlines will be met. To date, nearly 12 million voters have been registered, bearing out the enthusiasm that has been in evidence since the start of the registration process.

It is now urgent to quickly stabilize the security situation, including, in particular, through the prompt resolution of the worrisome issue of the disarmament of foreign armed groups, which threaten to disturb, even compromise, the proper holding of elections.

It should be recalled that it is urgent to support the efforts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to put an end to the presence of armed groups in the eastern part of the national territory and ensure their repatriation, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States. Adequate support for the training and equipping of our restructured and integrated armed forces, as well as the firm engagement of MONUC, will lead those groups to disarm. However, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has never preferred the military option or ever felt that it was the only possible way to ensure the repatriation of the foreign armed elements that have proliferated in the North and South Kivus. Therefore we have maintained contacts, through various intermediaries, with representatives of the Front démocratique pour la libération du Rwanda, which has

kept open the possibility of sustained voluntary disarmament followed by the voluntary repatriation of Rwandese armed elements. Two sets of consultations were held — in March and in September 2005 — but so far they have not led to the hoped-for results. If they fail, we will have to reconsider the option of forced disarmament, no matter what the cost for the Congolese armed forces, to whom it will fall to enforce it.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is grateful to the Security Council for having authorized MONUC to take action under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, whose application has had real results in Ituri. Recourse to Chapter VII in other areas, however, in particular in the North and South Kivus, has not yet had the full deterrent effect anticipated. Therefore, is it not time to consider, as the Security Council has wished, what assistance to provide to the *Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo* to realize the forced disarmament of the militias? Naturally, the successful outcome of such an operation will also depend on the determination of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of MONUC, and, above all, on the sincere commitment of our neighbours. The latter must refrain from any form of negative interference that would compromise efforts to neutralize the militias and other armed groups.

Beyond our security and strictly political concerns, we must also meet the legitimate needs of a population that for years has been deprived of its basic subsistence requirements. The economic and social policy of the Transitional Government seeks, in the short term, to meet the requirements to combat poverty, as well as to restructure the legal and financial sectors and to help restart productive activities — areas where a certain degree of success has been achieved. The State budget has increased substantially, the exchange rate has been stabilized, inflation is under control and, for the past three years, growth rates have ranged from 6 to 7 per cent. Those favourable economic developments have enabled us to launch a number of recovery plans in the areas of basic infrastructure and education, as well as in the field of health, by combating major epidemics and pandemics.

But the pace of progress in the social sphere is slow: very slow, in view of the people's numerous expectations. In order to consolidate the gains we have made, we will need to pick up the pace of our activities

and rapidly institute social initiatives that will have a visible impact. We therefore welcome the commitments made by our bilateral and multilateral partners to assist us in that direction.

The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is well aware of the importance of regional cooperation and of good-neighbourliness. For that reason, we support the Secretary-General's initiative — in conjunction with the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region — to organize in Nairobi an International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the region.

My country has been the main battleground of an armed conflict, with a toll of over 3 million dead, massive infringements of human rights and of international humanitarian law, the destruction of hospitals, schools, roads and bridges and the looting of natural resources and other forms of wealth. For that reason, my country hopes to be one of the main beneficiaries of the special reconstruction fund that has been set up within the framework of the International Conference on the Great Lakes region, and a priority zone in the subregion for rehabilitation and development.

The trials experienced by the Congolese people, and by all the peoples of the Great Lakes region, enable us to understand the aspirations for peace voiced by other peoples. We therefore support the peace process in the Middle East. The Democratic Republic of the Congo welcomes the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip. We believe that that initiative is an important step forward, one that should be consolidated in order to ensure peace and to put an end to the cycle of violence in that region. The sensitivity and the complexity of that situation further emphasize the commitment made by the State of Israel and by the Palestinian Authority to reach a negotiated solution to the crisis in the Middle East.

I also wish to commend the United Nations and the African Union for their efforts to bring the elections in Burundi and the Central African Republic to a successful conclusion. The positive outcome of the reconciliation processes in those two countries, as well as the prospects for positive developments in the situation in the Congo, bode well for the emergence of a new period of stability, democracy and prosperity for Central Africa.

In view of new threats, I wish to reaffirm the commitment of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the principles upon which our collective security is based. The coming years will be a time of increased competition among nations in the areas of trade, financial markets and research, including nuclear research; rapid globalization, made possible through information and communication technologies, has given rise at times to sometimes uncontrolled liberalization and bitter competition. It is thus our historic responsibility to equip the United Nations with the resources and structures not only to keep the peace wherever necessary and to guarantee our collective security wherever it is threatened, but also to better address issues of economic and social development, to establish more equitable rules of the game for international trade, to fight collectively and effectively against illiteracy, ignorance, intolerance, epidemics, disease and natural disasters, and, naturally, against terrorism, violence and injustice in all their forms so that we can build a more brotherly, peaceful, humane and just world.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Besnik Mustafaj, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania.

Mr. Mustafaj (Albania) (*spoke in French*): Let me first convey, on behalf of the people and the Government of Albania, the most profound sentiments of sympathy, friendship and solidarity to the people of the United States and to President Bush with respect to the human suffering and the material damage caused by Hurricane Katrina.

I would like to wish Mr. Jan Eliasson every success in carrying out his important mission. I take this opportunity to assure him of the full cooperation of my country in accomplishing the undertakings ahead of us. Let me also join others in thanking Mr. Jean Ping for the dedication he demonstrated as president of the General Assembly at its previous session and for the efforts he invested in the revitalization of our Organization.

Albania aligns itself fully with the statement made at the 9th plenary meeting by Mr. Jack Straw, Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom, on behalf of the European Union.

I am privileged to address the Assembly on behalf of the new Albanian Government, which took office following recent parliamentary elections. I will

set out some of my country's positions on issues of concern to us all and outline my Government's strategic priorities in the field of foreign policy.

The fact that, just a few days ago, a large number of heads of State and Government gathered at the United Nations to assess the progress made in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and to debate the reform of the Organization should be taken as a reaffirmation that multilateralism is a driving force in global policy. That also serves once again to confirm that we are living in a very complex and multidimensional environment that clearly requires comprehensive, global and coherent reactions.

The need for enhanced regional and global cooperation has never been more pronounced. Albania therefore supports the outcome of the High-level Plenary Meeting, which reaffirms our faith in the Organization, the importance of the core values and principles of international cooperation, the global partnership for development, concerted actions to strengthen collective security and peace, the fight against terrorism, promoting human rights and the rule of law and the strengthening of the United Nations, in particular its comprehensive reform. Albania believes that, through concrete and speedy action, the sixtieth session of the General Assembly will constitute an important and meaningful step towards the implementation of all the commitments to which I have referred.

Albania believes that the United Nations should be further strengthened in order to continue to play a decisive role in the efforts of the international community to create a safer, more stable and prosperous world. We would like to reiterate our appreciation for the efforts of the Secretary-General with regard to reforming the United Nations. Albania shares his view that the United Nations needs to have the legitimacy and flexibility to adapt itself to the circumstances of a changing world. The Security Council clearly has enormous responsibility in that regard. My country fully supports the reform of the Security Council. It should be noted, however, that we view Council reform from the standpoint of improving its working methods and transparency and of adjusting and improving the decision-making system. We firmly believe that Members acting together have the necessary power and capacity to achieve very broad consensus on Council reform.

The roles of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretary-General must not be underestimated. Their potential has not yet been fully explored. The success of the reform effort can be assured if it is coherent and aimed at the Organization as a whole. Albania is encouraged by the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting with regard to the strengthening of the United Nations. We reaffirm our willingness to work with all delegations to achieve the broadest consensus possible on the most important reform issues.

Albania believes that the Peacebuilding Commission will be an essential and efficient tool for developing more coherent, relevant and better funded strategies and for giving timely political attention to a country making the transition from conflict to sustainable development. In that connection, the reform of the United Nations will better enable the Organization to improve the work of the international community and assist countries in the post-conflict phase.

We believe that the exchange of views on the establishment of the Human Rights Council will be completed soon. An action-oriented Council with a credible membership will improve the quality of United Nations efforts in the area of human rights. Moreover, we fully support the strengthening of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, including increasing its budget.

Albania believes that the initiative to establish a Democracy Fund is an essential component of reform. My country will make every effort to support the Fund. Like other friendly countries, we consider it an effective mechanism to support new democracies, strengthen civil society and establish institutions supporting the rule of law.

The numerous tragic events of recent years have confirmed that terrorism, which has taken thousands of innocent lives, is the most urgent threat facing the world today. My country will remain committed to fighting this evil. We support Security Council resolution 1624 (2005), which was adopted during the high-level summit. We also join the solemn appeal to finalize the comprehensive convention against terrorism during the course of this session of the General Assembly. We believe that acts of terrorism carried out with weapons of mass destruction can have unprecedented consequences for humankind.

Arms control is a key element of my country's security policy. In that regard, I should like to point out our ongoing support for the further strengthening of crucial international disarmament and non-proliferation instruments. Albania is therefore fully committed to cooperate on disarmament and non-proliferation issues both in its own region and beyond. To that end, we have put in place robust measures at the national level to prevent the illicit trafficking in arms on our territory. In addition, with regard to implementing commitments on the control of small arms and light weapons, we have amended our national legislation in order to bring it closer to that of the European Union in areas such as licensing, strengthening import and export regimes and enforcement. Part of the Government's programme in this area has included the destruction of some 200,000 small arms and light weapons that had been in the hands of civilians. Moreover, in cooperation with foreign donors, the Government has drafted a programme to destroy all chemical weapons materials on our territory, thereby contributing to the strengthening of security in the region and beyond.

Albania is continuing to demonstrate the growing maturity of its democracy. The year 2005 is an election year in Albania. Last July's parliamentary elections and orderly transfer of power were tangible developments that had a positive impact on the country's future political, economic and social development.

Albania believes that good governance is a key element in improving the lives of all its citizens. Good governance is also an essential precondition to guaranteeing sustainable economic growth and eradicating poverty. In that regard, we will work tirelessly to strengthen the rule of law, promote transparency in the decision-making process and increase the Government's sense of responsibility to serve all citizens.

With regard to the economy, the new Albanian Government's priorities in the coming years will be to fight corruption and the factors that encourage it, promote free competition and relentlessly combat monopolies.

A set of measures is being contemplated to improve the national education system. Among those measures is the opening of universities to all who want to pursue higher education.

In addition, for the first time in its history, a woman heads Albania's National Assembly. This is a strong indication of Albania's serious commitment to gender equality.

The new Government is committed to improving the country's macroeconomic indicators. We are determined to develop social policies that guarantee gradual improvements in people's living standards, particularly for the most vulnerable. In order to achieve its programme's goals, the Government will support the expansion and modernization of the financial system, while keeping inflation under control, in an effort to improve the legal framework necessary for economic development.

With regard to our close cooperation with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, we are determined to promote sound macroeconomic and investment policies that will guide the country towards sustainable development, encourage the private sector and promote employment.

I would also like to assure the Assembly that our Government is fully committed to implementing the Millennium Development Goals. We share the belief that coordinating and harmonizing national and local development strategies, with wide-scale civil society participation, private sector initiative, heightened public awareness and the holding of public debates to identify the most effective ways and means to achieve the Millennium Development Goals will lead to the desired results, including in Albania.

The Albanian Government is resolved to combat organized crime, transnational crime, illegal trafficking and terrorism relentlessly by strengthening national legislation and law enforcement structures and by establishing relevant implementation mechanisms and fully committing itself to regional cooperation on a wider scale. That effort will serve to bring us closer to our friendly neighbours as well as to all European countries. This is a common struggle.

It should be recalled that my country has had excellent experience in coexistence among different religious communities. We are convinced that strengthening dialogue among cultures, civilizations and religions is an important element in strengthening peaceful coexistence and good-neighbourly relations. It also holds great potential for strengthening cooperation among countries. In that connection, an international forum was held in Tirana in December 2004 under the

auspices of the President of Albania and the Director-General of UNESCO. In addition to discussing important issues related to such a dialogue, the gathering also paved the way for further cooperation in that regard.

My country has decisively committed itself to the path to Euro-Atlantic integration, with the clear purpose of joining the European Union and NATO. We view Euro-Atlantic integration as our country's entry into the zone of peace, stability and prosperity established in Western Europe over the course of many years. Joining that family will signal our society's embrace of such values as economic and political freedom, fundamental human rights and freedoms, the primacy of law, social prosperity and solidarity. It will also reflect that fact that we are making our contribution to that set of values.

Albania is preparing for the closure of negotiations of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union that will lead to its signature. We are convinced that our country has the ability to meet all the requirements of this very rigorous process. Albanian society is firmly committed to carry out reform, which will contribute to our integration into the European Union. We believe that the reform process is, first and foremost, in the interest of the country and of strengthening the economy and improving Albania's image in the world.

We view NATO as a guarantor of security in our region. By increasing cooperation with NATO we are aiming at membership soon. Albania's participation in NATO peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Afghanistan constitutes a real contribution to both regional and international peace and security.

Good-neighbourly relations and cooperation with the countries of our region continue to be top priorities of our foreign policy. Our vision for a region of stability and security, through fruitful bilateral and multilateral cooperation, is sincere and is already quite clear. Our philosophy regarding the development of such relations is based on three basic principles: transparency, tolerance and dialogue. In that context, we have intensified high-level political dialogue with all the countries of the region. We have expanded the framework for legal and institutional cooperation at the bilateral and multilateral levels in many areas of common interest. That dialogue is becoming more

constant and sensible due to a spirit of mutual understanding and confidence.

Through their growing participation in peacekeeping missions in areas of conflict throughout the world, several countries of the region have been transformed from consumers to worthy contributors to the maintenance of international peace and security.

With regard to positive developments and progress in the region, Albania has consistently played a positive, moderating and constructive role vis-à-vis Albania's neighbouring countries by promoting multi-ethnic coexistence in an atmosphere of harmony and lasting peace. Albanian foreign policy holds that determining the status of Kosovo is an important issue. There is no more time to lose. The status quo will not guarantee lasting peace in the region. We believe that the answer to Kosovo's status should take into account the will of its people as democratically expressed and not disregard the rights of minorities. In that regard, conditional independence could allow the international community to monitor the development of Kosovo's institutions and society for a given period and, above all, would provide a guarantee for Serbs and other minorities to live in their own homes in that country. We all believe that Kosovo's future, as for all the countries in the region, lies in European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

We Albanians are confident that, in his forthcoming report, Mr. Kai Aide, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, will provide an objective assessment of the standards achieved thus far in Kosovo in connection with the establishment of the institutions for the rule of law and a democratic environment that will open the way for negotiations on Kosovo's final status. The Contact Group on Kosovo has an important role to play in that process.

In short, there have been some preliminary positive results. But there is much work to be done by us all to encourage and sustain the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade. There are many issues to discuss. With good will and the determination to achieve peace, we have much cause to be optimistic.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency the Honourable Abdulkader Shareef, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Shareef (United Republic of Tanzania): On behalf of the United Republic of Tanzania, I congratulate the President on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I wish him every success. I would also like to extend my delegation's gratitude to his predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, for presiding over the Assembly's fifty-ninth session, which, among other accomplishments, successfully negotiated the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting.

At the outset, I should like to commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his outstanding and tenacious leadership of the United Nations through one of the most trying interludes in the Organization's history. That period has probably been the most creative and visionary in the Secretary-General's career, as he inspired the Organization and its membership to embark upon ambitious and much-needed reforms to make the Organization relevant and equal to the threats and challenges of a globalizing world in the twenty-first century.

The summit that has just ended set the tone, agenda and direction for where the United Nations should go 60 years after its inception at San Francisco in 1945. The pace of reform will be determined by the collective political dedication of us, the Members of the Organization. The process of United Nations reform has brought us together and reaffirmed the sovereign equality of nations and demonstrated the indispensability of collective action and the demands of shared responsibility and obligations in international affairs. Although what we have agreed upon falls short of what we set out to accomplish, we have to put details into what we need to implement with the same spirit of collective dedication and a sense of common purpose. We should not allow political expediency and posturing to rob us of our declared objectives.

The glaring indignities of poverty, hunger, illiteracy and preventable disease amidst the glamour and opulence of prosperity in some quarters of the world should be relegated to the dustbin of history. That is achievable if we implement the commitments that we resolved to undertake at the summit that has just ended. At Monterrey we agreed on a framework for partnership. For some members of the G-8, Gleneagles transformed a 30-year-old pledge to devote 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) to official development assistance into a timetable; for others, it resulted in predictable increases. Debt

sustainability has finally given way to debt cancellation for some countries, including my own, the United Republic of Tanzania. That is a tremendous relief and will make a significant quantitative and qualitative difference to our development programmes and priorities.

Trade and investment have also received acceptance as being central to growth and development. The Doha trade and development round of negotiations, to take place in Hong Kong later this year, should be completed with agreements on pending issues such as subsidies.

The political capital generated at the summit should bring about a convergence of resources from our development partners and the economic, political, fiscal and institutional reforms already under way in Africa, and result in predictable and implementable development programmes. The issue of absorptive capacity should not arise when there is coherence and coordination among our partners within a collaborative framework at country level to mainstream assistance into national development strategies and priorities.

The United Republic of Tanzania has already complied with the critical element of paragraph 22 (a) of the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1), which calls upon developing countries to adopt and implement comprehensive national strategies to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). We are ahead in achieving the goal regarding universal primary education, namely, nine years before the 2015 deadline. We are on-course in achieving the goals regarding access to safe drinking water, reducing child mortality and promoting gender equality in political participation and decision-making structures. With steady assistance and our macroeconomic and political stability, we should get closer to achieving most of the Goals by 2015.

In sub-Saharan Africa individual countries are accelerating reforms and improving the climate for investment. Frontloading aid flows and innovative new sources of finance to bridge the financial gap in achieving the MDGs should be scaled up, as should aid-in-trade to overcome supply side constraints. Subsidies and market-access issues should also be addressed simultaneously in the international development agenda. The outcome of the Helsinki process, with its wealth of ideas, adds tremendous value both to the reform process launched last week

and to the overall international development agenda. It addresses political deficits and requirements to bring about purposeful development and democratic changes in this era of globalization.

The relationship between development and security at the national and international levels has clearly emerged during the debate and negotiations on the 2005 World Summit Outcome, on which I do not need to dwell here. The arms race in conventional and nuclear weapons can only bring the world to apocalyptic brinkmanship — by design or by accident. The agonizing endeavour to mobilize development efforts to achieve the MDGs stands in stark contrast to the irony of spending trillions of dollars on armaments of total and mass destruction. It is therefore most disconcerting that the summit was unable to come up with an agreement on disarmament and non-proliferation. We should not give up on the subject of disarmament and non-proliferation. Let us therefore make another effort to resume negotiations on those issues.

We in Tanzania and in our region are also particularly keen to see a global convention concluded soon to regulate the marking and tracing of all small arms and light weapons and on the illicit brokering of arms which fuel violent conflicts and instability in our regions in Africa.

Collective security cannot be enhanced without reform of the Security Council. The reform of the Security Council too has been deferred, but the issue of the Council's expansion and the reform of its working methods should remain on the agenda. Negotiations on the issue should resume soon. The United Republic of Tanzania supports the Ezulwini consensus on the reform of the Security Council, bearing in mind that only Africa has yet to have either a permanent seat or a veto in the Council. Our interlocutors should recognize that imbalance in our negotiations and should try to accommodate Africa's demands to make the Security Council more, not less, representative and more, not less, legitimate.

The condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations brings us closer to an agreed definition, which would be helpful in galvanizing our undivided efforts to combat terrorism. The lack of an agreed definition, however, should not delay an agreement on a comprehensive anti-terrorism convention in the course of this session of the General

Assembly. As a victim of terrorism in recent years, the United Republic of Tanzania has a compelling reason to support a global anti-terrorist strategy.

Respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people is entrenched in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and buttressed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For nearly 60 years, the institutional expression and status of human rights in the United Nations has been evolving, and it still is. We support the establishment of the Human Rights Council to the extent that it will elevate the centrality of human rights, enhance the moral authority and integrity of the United Nations, and overcome the shortcomings of the current Commission on Human Rights. The new Council should embody the principles and practices of peer review in its working methods to avoid double standards in accountability and compliance, which have plagued the Human Rights Commission.

The new concept of the "responsibility to protect" merits our support, after the recent international failures to protect people in Rwanda and Bosnia. The responsibility to protect should be a collective undertaking by States to protect populations from genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. However, we will need to establish benchmarks and safeguards to guarantee against unilateral and politically motivated interventions, such as those experienced in the past with what were conceived and presented as humanitarian intervention.

The African continent is the main scene of both looming and several ongoing natural and human-made disasters. Some are forgotten and protracted, while others gain initial media attention but receive delayed, and often inadequate, responses. We support the recommendations in the outcome document for new standby arrangements and funding for emergencies in Africa.

There is an international regime in place to provide protection and assistance to refugees fleeing for their lives from persecution, violence and gross violations of human rights. The United Republic of Tanzania has received and protected such victims since we became independent, in 1961. Currently, Tanzania is still hosting over half a million refugees. We are gratified and encouraged by the commitment in the outcome document to safeguard the institution of asylum and by its reaffirmation of the principle of

solidarity and burden-sharing in assisting refugee populations and their host communities. We equally hope that the recognition of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement will provide more effective protection for internally displaced persons by relevant and appropriate authorities.

The outcome document has duly recognized the tragedy of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the malaria and the tuberculosis that have hit Africa so hard. That global awareness should be matched by adequate funding to save current and succeeding generations from the ravages of those diseases.

Tanzania would like to thank President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria for the statement he made, in his capacity as Chairman of the African Union, on the situation relating to conflicts, peace and security in Africa. We are grateful to him, to other African leaders and to the Chairman of the African Union Commission — His Excellency President Alpha Konare — as well as to all our friends outside Africa, for their dedicated efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts in Africa.

Last week, the Security Council adopted its resolution 1625 (2005), on strengthening the effectiveness of the Council's role in conflict prevention, particularly in Africa. Among other things, the resolution stresses the importance of averting conflicts to make possible peaceful development, security and stability in Africa. The resolution also calls for the strengthening of cooperation and communication between the United Nations and regional organizations such as the African Union in mediation efforts and peacekeeping.

The bulk of United Nations peacekeeping operations are in Africa, following peace agreements that are at various stages of implementation. Despite serious numerical, logistical, financial and sometimes image constraints, multidimensional peacekeeping operations are making positive contributions to restoring peace in Africa in collaboration with the African Union and other friends of Africa. Political and operational partnerships between the United Nations and the African Union need to be strengthened and institutionalized.

We welcome the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in the Sudan in partnership with the United Nations. We encourage progress in the current peace negotiations on Darfur.

The institutional and operational requirement to bridge the transitional gap from peacekeeping to development, in the form of a Peacebuilding Commission, is one of the main decisions to have been taken in the current reform of the United Nations. Africa needs the Commission. It should become operational as soon as possible. The peaceful outcomes in Burundi and Somalia — and, soon, in Sierra Leone and Liberia — require a peacebuilding mechanism during the transition from peacekeeping to reconstruction and development. The peace processes in both Burundi and Somalia have had tortuous paths, but those countries finally have peace agreements and transitional Governments in place. The Peacebuilding Commission should focus priority attention on both Burundi and Somalia. The second summit on the Great Lakes region, to be held later this year in Nairobi, will pave the way for a peace and security pact and for peacebuilding initiatives in the region.

The only remaining case of self-determination in Africa is Western Sahara. We appeal for maximum cooperation by the parties concerned and for unrelenting support for the issue from the international community through the Baker plan. It is in the interest of all of us here to reach a peaceful solution to that problem.

I cannot conclude my statement without addressing the situation in the Middle East, and in particular the question of Palestine, which remains of great concern to my Government. There have been path-breaking developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to revive the road map and invigorate the initiatives of the Quartet. The new leadership of Mr. Mahmoud Abbas at the Palestinian Authority, the withdrawal of Israel from the Gaza Strip and the coming elections in the occupied territories are injecting new dynamism and a positive direction into the peace process. But we must accept the reality that the people of Palestine have equal rights, not only to live in peace and security in full human dignity but also to establish their own independent State, coexisting side by side with the State of Israel. We should therefore do all we can to help secure the just and lasting peace that is the right of the Palestinian, Israeli and Arab peoples.

Finally, I want to reiterate our deepest sympathies and condolences to the victims, the Government and the people of the United States of America in the wake

of the death and destruction wreaked by Hurricane Katrina.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

Several representatives have requested to be permitted to speak in exercise of their right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Mavroyiannis (Cyprus): I wish to reply to the statement made this morning by Mr. Abdullah Güll, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey. Without examining Mr. Güll's assessment of recent developments with regard to the Cyprus problem, with which we entirely disagree, and without entering into polemics, I would like briefly to make the following points.

First, there are not two peoples in Cyprus. All people on Cyprus, regardless of their ethnic or religious origins, make up the Cypriot people.

Secondly, there is no such thing as the "Greek Cypriot administration". One would have thought that speakers addressing the General Assembly could at least conform to the provisions of the Charter and the resolutions of the Organization, and refrain from insulting its general membership by pretending that the Republic of Cyprus, the only recognized State on the island, does not exist.

Thirdly, references to unfair restrictions imposed upon Turkish Cypriots, as Turkey has chosen to label them, are profoundly misguided. I believe there is no need for me to explain that international legal norms safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and could not possibly condone the separatists' attempts in the occupied part of Cyprus in breach of Security Council resolutions.

Fourthly, and lastly, the Turkish accusation that the Government of Cyprus is attempting to refer the Cyprus issue to other forums is completely inconsistent with reality. We maintain that there is no alternative to the United Nations context for seeking a solution to the Cyprus problem, but we cannot accept Turkey's attempts to evade fulfilling its obligations within the European Union framework by using as a pretext the

ongoing efforts to solve the Cyprus problem at the United Nations.

Mr. Kitchen (Zimbabwe): The Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic today made a careless and unsubstantiated allegation: that my country is one of those that have repeatedly failed to respond to human rights concerns of the international community. We do not know what concerns he was talking about. The Minister has obviously allowed himself to be misinformed about Zimbabwe. We hope his delegation will find the courage to check its information with an open and unbiased mind. However, we have an idea about what the Minister meant by the "international community". We know that his country is eager to impress the particular international community he was talking about. However, my delegation would appreciate it if the Czech Republic refrained from using the name of Zimbabwe in pursuit of its objectives.

Mr. Udovicki (Serbia and Montenegro): I would like to reply to the statement made by Mr. Besnik Mustafaj, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania.

We are surprised that Albania has changed its policy and that it is advocating the independence of Kosovo and Metohija. That demand prejudices the future status of Kosovo and Metohija before talks on that issue have even started.

It does not contribute to the much-needed cooperation between Belgrade and Tirana or to stability in the region. We would like recall that Kosovo and Metohija is a part of Serbia and that talks on the future status of the province will be conducted between Belgrade, Pristina and the international community, within which there is wide consensus.

Mr. Cumberbach Miguén (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): An old comic tells the story of a rabbit that, protected by hunters, was able to tame lions. Then one day, confronted by one of the great felines without his usual protectors, he was devoured on the spot. Apparently, the regime misgoverning the Czech Republic is now, with regard to Cuba, playing the role of that rabbit, sheltered by a powerful guardian. It apparently is unaware of the fact that, for some 47 years now, the Cuban revolution has been resisting the onslaughts of the greatest Power of this world, which has attempted to undermine Cuba in every way

possible. And yet, what can one expect from satraps, lackeys and boot-lickers?

Following instructions given thousands of miles away in Prague, just to the north of our island, the Czech delegation sits here in judgement of others with respect to human rights. We look forward to hearing about the immaculate record of human rights protection and promotion in that country.

We suppose that it has magically stemmed the rise of xenophobia and fascist discrimination that has been practised in the Czech Republic since the Second World War against the Roma minority. We would also imagine that the supreme moralists and protectors of the Czech Republic have managed to reverse the spectacular upsurge in prostitution and violence against women and children associated with that terrible era. In such an unassailable position, the Czech Republic must now be free of the mafia that has corrupted its every institution and controls every shady dealing, imaginable, from drugs and weapons to financial crime. In a perfect society like that of the Czech Republic, it was surprising to hear of the recent resignation of the Prime Minister under allegations of embezzlement of public funds.

The Commission on Human Rights needs to be rebuilt in order to put an end to the pathetic circus shows played out every year by delegations such as that of the Czech Republic — pitifully, compared to the true artists of the genre — in the conference rooms of United Nations headquarters in Geneva. If such miserable spectacles pass for cooperation with the human rights machinery of the Organization, to which the Czech representative referred with such dramatic hypocrisy this morning, Cuba wants nothing to do with it. The same holds true if we are expected to put up with the tall stories retailed by the United States in the Commission's work as it blackmails and bullies half the world.

Allow us to recall that the Czech Republic remained shockingly and resoundingly silent when the Commission debated the scandalous cases of torture and violence inflicted on prisoners at the illegal naval base of Guantánamo. If the human rights council to be established repeats the falsehoods, double standards, politicization and selectivity of view that the Western Powers and their political satellites have imposed on the Commission for years, we can announce its superannuation here and now.

Given its own situation, the Czech Republic, rather than dancing badly to someone else's music, would do better to strive to win international respect by addressing the serious political, social and economic problems within its own borders.

Ms. Dolakova (Czech Republic): Let me briefly comment on what the representatives of Zimbabwe and Cuba have just said in reply to the address of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic this morning.

My delegation would like to express its regret that the mere statement of the obvious facts on the lack of cooperation of certain countries, including Cuba and Zimbabwe, with the Commission on Human Rights could cause such strong responses. We could also interpret that overreaction as a sign of nervousness and bad conscience.

We sincerely hope that the cooperation of those countries with the Commission will soon improve, and we are ready to discuss those issues at relevant international forums, including the future human rights council. At the same time, we will not shy away from discussing openly, constructively and fully any matter of substance related to the alleged violations of human rights in my country.

Mr. Mustafaj (Albania) (*spoke in French*): Frankly, I was not expecting such a swift reaction from my friends in Belgrade. I would like to clarify that Albania has not and will not intervene in any way in the future of Kosovo, but that since Kosovo is our nearest neighbour, we cannot remain indifferent, particularly as we prepare for the launching of negotiations on the future and final status of that country.

We must not forget that we are paying such particular attention to the region's future because any instability there is fraught with consequences for my country. It will be recalled that there was a humanitarian disaster there six years ago, and my country suffered its consequences. More than 1 million innocent Kosovars sought refuge in Albania, a country with very limited resources for sheltering so many people. My country also suffered the consequences of the war. We do not wish to see that repeated.

So long as the international community remains committed to and involved in debating the future of Kosovo, it is perfectly natural and sincere to express

our thoughts about its future. It is not we, however, who will decide. There are concrete factors, the institutions and people of Kosovo, and international agencies present there, and they will determine the province's future.

Secondly, I find it very old-fashioned to suggest that the fact that we are still talking about the future of Kosovo could in some way hamper relations between Tirana and Belgrade. Albania and Serbia and Montenegro are independent countries. No third-party issues, such as those of Kosovo, can determine relations and exchanges between our two countries. We are resolved to develop good economic, cultural and political relations because they help to bring our countries closer together and serve stability and friendship in the region. One cannot base dialogue on blackmail. That is not normal.

Mr. Cumberbach Miguén (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation deeply regrets the fact that the delegation of the Czech Republic persists in its false accusations.

With regard to cooperation with United Nations human rights mechanisms, our country, as is well documented, has always cooperated with all those thematic mechanisms of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights that have not been subject to double standards or politicization. On a number of occasions, we have welcomed representatives of the Office to our territory, including the very first High Commissioner in 1993.

As to the concerns attributed to my delegation by the delegation of the Czech Republic, I would recall — in case Prague has been struck with amnesia — that the Czech Republic has over the course of the years been involved in numerous schemes to discredit the achievements of the Cuban people. It is no coincidence that it has served as a docile mouthpiece to the United States in its attempts to undermine Cuba in the Commission, organizing conferences and meetings at United Nations headquarters in Geneva and in Prague in recent years on the so-called human rights situation in Cuba, with the participation and full cooperation of the cream of the far-right Cuban terrorists from Miami and well-known genocidal democrats from other parts of the world.

It was only to be expected that, true to form, the Government of the Czech Republic would vociferously support the establishment by the United States of the

so-called Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba. It even sent its ambassador to Washington, D.C., for the appointment of the coordinator for transition in Cuba — a kind of proconsulate appointed by the Empire to enact its political ambitions and wild dreams for our country. The Czech Government is little more than an accomplice and sponsor of the terrorism waged against Cuba and its people, and has played an active role in the cruel economic blockade of our country.

Its attitude should therefore be judged and condemned by the international community. It is they, and not us, who should be nervous and guilt-ridden. Our delegation reserves the right to revisit this issue. In the meantime, and to the displeasure of the Czech

Republic, our people, under the leadership of its party and freely elected Government, will not allow its revolution and achievements to be trampled underfoot by mercenaries and terrorists in the pay of a foreign Power that the Government of the Czech Republic has the sad and dirty task to support.

Mr. Kitchen (Zimbabwe): My delegation, in its last intervention, invited the delegation of the Czech Republic to look at the issues with an open mind. It is clear from the response we have just received that it is not prepared to do so. That is understandable, but also regrettable.

The meeting rose at 7.25 p.m.